DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 456 873 JC 010 600

TITLE	Issues of Education at Community Colleges: Essays by Fellows in the Mid-Career Fellowship Program at Princeton University, 2000-2001.
INSTITUTION	Princeton Univ., NJ. Mid-Career Fellowship Program.
PUB DATE	2001-07-00
NOTE	175p.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - General (020)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC07 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*College Faculty; *Community Colleges; Educational Development; *Educational Practices; Educational Strategies; *Postsecondary Education as a Field of Study; Teacher Attitudes; Teaching Methods; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

This document contains 11 essays by fellows in the Mid-Career Fellowship Program at Princeton University (New Jersey). Published in July 2001, the articles in this document include: (1) "Writing for Community College Students--A New Approach" (David Daniels); (2) "The Fourth Paradigm: Establishing Shared Governance at a New Jersey Community College: The Formation of One Faculty Senate; Viewed within a National Context" (Charles Di Domenico); (3) "A Journey with Students into African American Literature and Culture" (Mary Hatcher); (4) "Challenges to the Brick and Mortar of the Community Colleges" (Marie Kolatis Davies); (5) "Understanding the Challenges of Cross-Cultural Communication in the Community Colleges" (Win Win Kyi); (6) "Struggling with Gender: A Male in Literary Feminism" (Timothy McCracken); (7) "Sitting by the River: Reconnecting Students to the Classroom: A Personal Study" (Vicki Reback); (8) "The Affective Domain in Online Education" (Ethel Russell); (9) "Recommendations to Fortify Students Services: Reorganization, Consolidation, and Program Integration" (Steven Stolar); (10) "Student Persistence in Web-based Courses: Identifying a Profile for Success" (Thomas Valasek); (11) 'Academic Vitality and the Academic Seminar at Community Colleges" (Darryl Walke). (Each article contains references.) (EMH)

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Essays by Fellows in the Mid-Career Fellowship Program at Princeton University, 2000-2001

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Writing for Community College Students-A New Approach

David Daniels

Camden County College
Mid-Career Fellowship Program
May 2001

Writing for Community College Students—A New Approach

David Daniels

Camden County College

In 1987, E. D. Hirsch, a professor of English at the University of Virginia, published *Cultural Literacy*, provocatively subtitled *What Every American Needs to Know*. His premise was simple: some people possess a large and heterogeneous body of information enabling them to read well. Conversely, people who lack this information have grave difficulty understanding what they read. Put this way, Hirsch's thesis seems innocuous, even self-evident.

The appearance of Hirsch's book, however, coincided with various conservative attacks on American education. Partly for that reason, it received a great deal of attention in the media. In my circles, people mostly dismissed it as a joke or perceived it as a threat. Some of my colleagues talked derisively about being asked to teach "Name Dropping 101." Others attacked Hirsch's long list of items "literate Americans know" as racist, sexist, elitist, or Eurocentric, an epithet much in vogue at the time. Still others (like me) had harmless fun with individual items (Ann Arbor, Michigan?) or pondered his standards for inclusion (Babe Ruth, yes, but why Ty Cobb, and why not Joe DiMaggio?).

Like other books on education reform, *Cultural Literacy* caused a temporary furor, then faded quietly away. As a participant in a right-wing conspiracy Hirsch hardly merits a footnote.

But as an explainer of why some of our students can't read their textbooks very well, he deserves a second look; the political debate (of great importance in itself) effectively cut short the pedagogical discussion that ought to have followed its appearance. If he is even partly right, and I believe he is, community colleges need to reconsider the kind of reading instruction they offer. Moreover, we teachers need to supplement the assignments we make in content courses with readings that provide the background students need to do those assignments successfully. Since those readings mostly don't yet exist, we need to write them.

College-level reading instruction is presently grounded in structure, not content. At the developmental level, texts emphasize finding a passage's thesis, locating the main ideas supporting that thesis, interpreting details, distinguishing between fact and opinion, drawing inferences, understanding the author's purpose and tone, and so on. (I'm summarizing selectively the table of contents of one of the best developmental reading texts, John Langan's *Ten Steps to Improving College Reading Skills*.) All this is important, and students who don't read very well need this kind of help. But if Hirsch is right, cultural information is at least as important as any, or perhaps all, structural analysis. Although developmental texts sometimes include a chapter on vocabulary building, I've yet to see one that guides students on how to interpret the cultural references that you and I have learned to take in almost without conscious thought. In fact, the practice reading passages in Langan's book seem expressly written to avoid cultural references, presumably based on the theory that students who can bring outside information to bear will gain an unfair advantage over their peers.

It's difficult to see how students can make a smooth transition from this kind of instruction to the reading they need to do in college-level courses. Last week I received in the mail an examination copy of a potential English 101 text: a book called *The Transition to College Writing* by Keith Hjortshoj. I glanced through it and liked it; it's well written and offers some original approaches to familiar material. The chapter on critical reading makes many sensible suggestions. In the course of it, Hjortshoj shows students how to annotate a passage from Edward O. Wilson's book *The Diversity of Life* (1992), which begins

> Evolution is blinkered still more by the fact that the frequency of genes and chromosomes can be shifted by pure chance. The process, an alternative to natural selection called genetic drift, occurs most rapidly in very small populations.

Preparatory to demonstrating how to isolate and underline key ideas in this passage, Hjortshoj remarks soothingly, "This is a clear, concise explanation of genetic drift as a factor in evolution, and while you [the student for whom this text is intended] were reading it you probably felt that you understood what Wilson was saying" (138). Hjortshoj teaches at Cornell; far above Cayuga's waters students may feel that; beside Big Timber Creek, where I teach, I wonder what they would feel. How many of my students would know what genes and chromosomes are? To how many does the term "natural selection" communicate a clear idea? What, if anything, do they know about evolution? (Even the word *blinkered* might give them pause.) I remembered a passage from Hirsch's book about the American Civil War; his point about it was that readers who had never heard of Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee would find it unintelligible.

As Hirsch's example indicates, when we teach a course in which the subject matter has a historical dimension, our problems are compounded. I teach literature survey courses from Norton anthologies; some students tell me they find the introductory passages intended to ease their way into the reading selections too difficult to be useful. I've also examined textbooks used in some of our history and art appreciation courses. These are good texts, expressly designed to introduce students to subjects they haven't thought much about before. Yet the authors make assumptions about their previous knowledge that seem to me scarcely warranted. Here's a passage selected not quite at random from *A History of the Modern World to 1815* by R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton. It comes from a section entitled "The Crusade of Catholic Spain":

> In this period, the *siglo de oro*, running in round dates from 1550 to 1650, Cervantes wrote his *Don Quixote* and Lope de Vega his seven hundred dramas, while El Greco, Murillo, and Velázquez painted their pictures, and the Jesuit Suarez composed works on philosophy and law that were read even in Protestant countries. But the essence of Spanish life was its peculiarly intensive Catholicism. (127)

The previous sentence said that ". . . Spain [had] entered the Golden Age of its culture," so perhaps a good student innocent of Spanish could work out the meaning of *siglo de oro* (or, if he or she didn't, could possibly do without it). I myself have never read a work by the Jesuit philosopher Francisco Suarez (1548-1617), so I take it on faith that, in the poisonous atmosphere of the seventeenth century, books that could appeal on both sides of the religious divide must have extraordinary merit. But for a student who has not only never read *Don Quixote* but never heard of Cervantes, has never heard of, let alone read a play by, Lope de Vega, and never seen a painting by El Greco, Murillo, or Velázquez, the Golden Age of Spain most likely suggests little or nothing. Even the concept of a Golden Age, whether or not we remember to trace it back to Hesiod, suggests worlds more to us than it does to them.

The cultural background students need to understand a passage such as this may be precisely what they want out of college. A good world literature class may introduce them to Cervantes and Lope de Vega; an art history course will likewise probably account for the painters. But people who don't bring such knowledge with them into their history class cannot read paragraph after paragraph such as this without feeling almost as if their textbook were written in a foreign language.

We need textbooks for community college classes that take better account of what their prospective readership can and cannot be expected to know. The point of the section from which the above passage comes is to explain Spain's role in the religious wars of the seventeenth century. To suit that purpose, it's possible to write

> Between 1550 and 1650, Spanish culture entered a Golden Age. But the great literature and art produced during those years coexisted with intense devotion to the nation's powerful Catholic church.

If this seems too bland, we can try again:

> Between 1550 and 1650, Spanish culture entered a Golden Age. During those years the novelist Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616) wrote *Don Quixote* (*Key*-ho-*tay*), the story of an old man trying to recreate in his own life an imaginary world of adventure he had learned about in books. The painter Diego Velázquez (1599-1660) produced brilliant works portraying members of the Spanish royal family as well as memorable scenes of everyday life. Many other excellent writers and painters also flourished during this period. But the great literature and art produced during those years coexisted with intense popular devotion to the nation's powerful Catholic church.

Community college faculty are the logical candidates to write the needed textbooks, and for this task they need both adequate time away from teaching and a quick resolution to the battle over intellectual property rights now being fought in contract negotiations throughout the country. But even instructors who have no ambition to write textbooks can get into the act. Because for the most part the required texts don't yet exist, teachers can produce handouts, one or two pages in length, that fill in some gaps in the texts they assign, provided they can anticipate the background information their students need before dealing with the texts themselves.

The kind of writing our students need to read isn't easy to do. Our first difficulty is psychological: we must acknowledge the full extent to which our students lack the kind of information we routinely brought with us to college. It means admitting we aren't offering them quite the kind of courses we attended as undergraduates—the kind in which Old Professor So-and-So rightly assumed his students could find Spain on a world map; he had never been asked by a student, as my wife was once, if New Mexico is a country. Offering them the same kind of fare on which we ourselves thrived and expecting that, once exposed to the glories of intellectual life, they will raise their games to the requisite level, will work with some students. But many others will be first bewildered, then frustrated, and quite a few will ultimately disappear from our classes without ever telling us why.

Nevertheless, we need to remember that we're writing for college students—intelligent and eager for knowledge if a little underinformed. A few months ago, my wife and I looked up a book of ours, *English Grammar*, on Amazon.com. A buyer had reviewed it, calling it "easy but not condescending." I quote this aware that if it's true, the credit goes to Barbara; she had spent many hours convincing me that the richly allusive, periodic style in which I was then accustomed to write wouldn't do for this kind of book. "Easy but not condescending" is what I aim for now; the dangers of obscurity and condescension seem to me equally worth avoiding.

Here are some principles I've found worth following. I've included only those that don't duplicate the basic principles of good writing most community college teachers already know.

Don't worry about readability formulas; they are beside the point.

Formulas to determine readability at various grade levels—the Dale-Chall Readability Formula, the Fleisch "Reading Ease" Formula, the Fog Index, and so on, which rely on measuring word and sentence length—were designed for testing the appropriateness of elementary and high school texts and have not done much good even there. The risk of insulting our students by using only short sentences and easy vocabulary is as great, if not greater, than the risk of puzzling them. I've found that whenever I pay conscious attention to sentence lengths and vocabulary levels, I find myself unintentionally writing for fifth graders.

Virtually all writing assumes some previous knowledge on the reader's part. If students need to look something up in a dictionary or reference work occasionally in order to understand one of our handouts, so be it. But we must constantly remember that many of them won't do that at all, and most won't look up more than a handful of difficult items per page.

Keep new information to a necessary minimum.

Some years ago, I was teaching a course in American Literature from its beginnings to 1860, and we were about to tackle the Puritans. Since American Puritanism is unintelligible without at least some knowledge of the Protestant Reformation, I thought at first that I would begin the class by reviewing some European history. Because the ground I proposed to cover is neither American Literature nor even (directly) American history, I soon had a better idea. I would write up a page or two of background material narrating the entire history of the Protestant Reformation in about three hundred words and give it to my students to supplement their reading assignment (excerpts from William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*.) After the requisite preliminary noodling, I sat down and typed

> In 1517, a German monk and theologian named Martin Luther . . .

Here I paused. Would many of my students know what a theologian was? I decided to use a revision technique my 101 students taught me: when I point out that something they wrote needs clarification, they usually strike it out entirely. So:

> In 1517, a German monk named Martin Luther . . .

But would they know what a monk was? Maybe, and maybe not. Fortunately, Luther was a priest (many monks weren't). So the final version read

> In 1517, a German priest named Martin Luther . . .

Provide explanations and definitions within the text, not in the form of notes.

Many students ignore foot or endnotes (so do you and I, sometimes). Later in this handout, I explain why Henry VIII broke with the Roman Catholic church and why, since England then became nominally a Protestant country, the Pilgrims felt the need to leave in order to practice their own kind of Protestantism:

> Henry VIII's principal interest was not in church reform. It was to father a male child who could succeed him on the throne. So the new Church of England closely

> resembled the Roman Catholic Church. For example, it still conducted worship with a great deal of ceremony: priests performed mass in costly robes, choirs sang, and so on, while other Protestant groups simplified their services to more closely resemble how Christians worshipped in earliest times. Those who did opened themselves to persecution under Henry, just as they would have in Catholic countries.

I was eager to add much additional information about the similarities and differences between the two churches, but the explanatory aside had already begun to outgrow the simple outline the students would be willing to digest.

Personalize the material when you can.

Don't overdo this; it will probably turn out more interesting to you than it will to them. But I did have an experience about 15 years ago that helped me understand the Reformation as much as any book had done:

> In the 16th and 17th centuries, religion played a far deeper role in some people's lives than most of us can even imagine. I have relatives who came to this country from Sweden about 1840 and settled in South Dakota. Uncle Milton and Aunt Grace still live on the original home farm. In their part of the state the distances between neighbors are so great and the population so scanty, money isn't available to maintain a church building or pay a minister. So Milton, Grace, and five of their neighbors used to meet in one of their homes on Sunday mornings and choose one of their number to conduct the service.

> About two years ago, this group of seven quarreled bitterly and split up over a religious question that, when Milton told the extended family about it at a reunion, most of us could hardly understand. Now they meet three in one house and four in the other. Whenever I think of the religious controversies of the centuries after the Reformation, this incident comes to mind.

At the time, I was a little sorry to expend so much space on this anecdote, but it turned out to be the most memorable thing in the piece (several students referred to it on an exam).

Perhaps as a result of teaching argument for so long, I've come to distrust analogies. The analogy between my relatives and the Protestant radicals of three hundred years ago is far from perfect (it probably breaks down in several ways I haven't even thought of), but for explanatory purposes it's close enough, and, as I said, the students responded to it with considerable interest.

Find popularizers whose work you like and study them

In effect, we grew up on academic writing. As a result, books in our own subject areas intended for popular audiences sometimes appear to us superficial and dependant on obsolete sources. Perhaps that's why my favorite popularizers are historians of various sorts, not literary scholars. I've enjoyed, admired, and learned from the works of Christopher Hibbert (*The House of Medici: Its Rise and Fall*; *Rome: The Biography of a City*, and others). *Renaissance Lives* by Theodore K. Rabb (unlike Hibbert an academic wearing another hat) is also worth looking at in this regard. My favorite art historian is Kenneth Clark, whose *Civilization*, based on a television series, was a best seller a couple of decades ago. E. H. Gombrich's *The Story of Art*, intended as an introductory text, is a marvel of clarity and selection. None of these books is ideal for a community college audience; all contain references that, from the viewpoint taken in this paper, require supplementation. But any instructor writing for community college students had far better take any of these books as a starting point than the works of scholars writing for other scholars.

Discuss your writing with your students.

Trying to put yourself in your students' place is good; letting them tell you what they did and didn't understand is better. The first time I distributed the handout described above, the students were full of questions—about the Reformation, as it happened, not about the American Puritans. So, rightly or wrongly, I left Bradford for the following class. As we talked I found out several things: first, despite the fact that most of my students were at least nominally Roman Catholics, their knowledge of their church's principles and practices was scanty, their knowledge of Protestantism practically nonexistent. I also found out where my handout was clear and where it wasn't; I took notes and modified it accordingly.

The objections to what I'm proposing are several and varied. To a colleague who tells me, "I haven't got time to do what you suggest, at least not on any regular basis," I answer, "You're right; you haven't." We need to teach less; if we did, we would teach better. But I find this kind of writing fun, and I learn from it, so I continue to do it, even to the neglect of other calls on my time, academic and otherwise. As a practiced popularizer, I can often produce a reasonable, although far from perfect, handout in a couple of hours. And as I've already said, almost every time I use it with a class I rewrite it some, so that it eventually becomes difficult to say what sort of investment in time each one represents. But I have several handouts that I can use with more than one class (the Protestant Reformation handout has also appeared in my World and English literature classes, for example). And the more difficult ones to do, those that require extensive preliminary reading or particular care to get right, I believe benefit me at least as much as they do my students.

As I've already admitted, writing and distributing our own handouts can slow down the pace of our courses. Ideally, we should be able to distribute them, tell the students to read them at home before they do their textbook assignment, and discuss just the textbook assignment in class, relying on our students' better background to make the discussion more lively. But that seldom happens. I'm personally resigned to the idea that often slower is better. Early in my career, when I taught the English Literature survey course, I would assign Book I, Canto 1 of Edmund Spenser's *Faery Queene*, come to class and talk to myself about it. Now I ask them to bring in their texts and we read the first few stanzas together, line by line and even word by word. We get through about 100 lines in an hour and fifteen minute class, but at least most of my students have read those 100 lines. I'm probably violating every articulation agreement my school ever signed by treating the material in this way. But my students genuinely understand the smaller chunk of material we elucidate together in class and may be moved to read further on their own at some later date.

A closely related objection is that what I'm suggesting constitutes a weakening ("dumbing down") of our courses. Community college faculty are sometimes defensive about this and like to argue that our courses are the same as a student would get during the first two years at any four-year college. That's why they assign the same texts as students would be assigned at such colleges and try to teach their courses in the same way as if they were teaching at Rutgers or Princeton. My only answer is that our handouts, if done well, might be useful to students at those places too. Even if not, it's willful blindness not to admit that many of our students are playing catch-up, and that it's our job to help them. People erecting structures on bedrock can build high and fast. Before the Venetians could erect their city, they needed to drive millions of stout pilings into the mud of their intransigent lagoon. But the city they built is beautiful.

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THE FOURTH PARADIGM:

Establishing Shared Governance at a New Jersey Community College:

The Formation of One Faculty Senate;

Viewed Within a National Context

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**Submitted to:
Professor T. Rabb
In fulfillment of the requirements of the
The Mid-Career Fellowship Seminar
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey**

May 22, 2001

In the late Fall of 1999, the faculty at Middlesex County College in Edison, New Jersey, after a series of meetings, voted to create a faculty senate.

In April, 2000, the faculty presented the concept to the Board of Trustees proposing that a Faculty Senate be accepted as a formal consulting body within the college governance structure.

In August of 2000, the college President presented his formal response to the Board of Trustees regarding the faculty proposal. That response was a rejection of the entire idea of a faculty senate, contending that the existing College Assembly, a body composed of faculty, administrators and students whose decisions were not binding, was already performing the tasks proposed for the new faculty senate and that to change from the College Assembly to the Faculty Senate would cut off and violate the rights of other college constituencies, such as the students, who would not be represented in the Senate.

In November, 2000, the President of the Board of Trustees of Middlesex County College formally responded in a letter to the faculty regarding its proposal, taking the position delineated by the college president that a Faculty Senate would be redundant and would fail to represent all college constituencies.

Undeterred, the Middlesex faculty has moved ahead with its plans to form a faculty senate, has elected officers through a campus wide vote, obtained representatives from departments, and has held its first meeting, with more planned.

The question now, very simply, is: what does this all mean? What is the significance of the formation of a Faculty Senate? Equally important, what is best; for the faculty, for the administration, for the institution? What will happen next? What should happen?

As a starting point for this assessment, a review of the literature was conducted to examine the national context of faculty senates, particularly their incidence, prevalence, results and success.

A Survey of the Literature

The first issue that presents itself in reviewing the literature is the need to define terms. When we talk about faculty senates, we are in effect talking about "shared governance" of an academic institution, also referred to as "collegial governance," "faculty participation in institutional decision-making," and other. These terms can be taken as synonymous and used interchangeably. In practice, shared governance can take many forms, from actual shared legal authority between faculty and administration for the operation of the institution to senates acting as consulting and advisory bodies. A more clear picture of shared governance should emerge from the discussion below.

Another revelation found in the literature is the scope of the issue of "shared governance." This is not merely a local affair, but a national one, a sizeable, established phenomenon nationwide with a history and with larger dimensions than might appear at first. It currently exists or is under discussion at many institutions, and has a particularly strong presence at the community college level.

Some state legislatures have enacted laws requiring their university and community college administrations to share governance with faculty. In this regard, the history of faculty or academic senates in California is noteworthy. In California, the legislature specifically designated that faculty senates be formed, that administration help in their formation, in effect play midwife to the birth of faculty senates, and then share power with them. California Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 48:

> provided for and directed the State Board of Education to establish academic senates "for the purposes of representing [faculty] in the formation of policy on academic and professional matters. . . ." Under this resolution, academic or faculty senates received legal recognition and jurisdiction over academic and professional matters (Conn 6).

The strong language here should be noted. The California Legislature did not merely set up "advisory" senates which an administration was free to heed or not as it wished, but instead gave faculty legal power, legal jurisdiction, to share governing authority and created faculty senates by law as the official medium for that shared governance. These senates weigh in on everything from academic issues to fiscal planning to care of the physical plant. In California, shared governance is "business as usual."

Another insight gained from the literature is the way in which faculty senates or shared governance bring significant benefit to academic institutions, and the reason(s) why. Put simply, shared governance or the formal acceptance of faculty as partners in the operation of the institution has been shown to make faculty feel professionally and personally respected and valued which increases faculty's self esteem and motivates faculty to invest increased time and effort in the institution. Three benefits of this are: a more harmonious, consensus based decision making process with a significant reduction in the adversarial atmosphere between faculty and administration that can occur in academic institutions; a positive exploitation of the extensive expertise in a wide range of fields that the faculty represents and which is not utilized when administrations go to consultants outside the institution for guidance; and a more well rounded program of offerings both curricular and extra curricular that results from renewed faculty enthusiasm and motivation.

A prime example of the benefits of increased faculty self esteem is Paducah Community College in Kentucky. Faculty morale was at its lowest point in 1990. The problems were the standard ones: budget cuts, a history of top down management with decisions handed down by administration, and the increasing demands for accountability that have become the keynote of recent years. A new president was brought in with the express challenge and mandate to turn the college around within the context of severely limited resources. Fortuitously, this new president "had recently completed research on governance styles in higher education and developed a fourth paradigm of college governance, [which he called] faculty professional self-esteem (Halford 2).

This paradigm holds that faculty who feel that they are treated with respect and valued as professionals are more effective and productive than those who do not feel so valued and respected. The concept, developed through a study of faculty/staff needs and interests at 25 community colleges in 13 states, is based on nine variables or areas of concern:

1. The physical environment and its condition
2. Appropriate consultative; and participatory management
3. Open communications
4. Honest, even-handed administrators
5. Thorough and open access to budget development
6. Control over classroom-related matters
7. Adequate instructional support services
8. Opportunities for professional growth and renewal
9. Meaningful involvement in setting and evaluating institutional mission, goals, and objectives (Halford 3).

It must be pointed out that the "fourth paradigm" really amounts to shared governance between administration and faculty. The concept holds that the increased faculty professional self-esteem created by attention to the above areas can accomplish institutional objectives despite reduced funding and material resources.

> The fourth paradigm suggests that, in times of limited resources, enhanced self-esteem and shared governance [can] provide the resources to reshape [overcome the lack of] existing resources for a more effective learning environment (6).

Studies show that when faculty are involved meaningfully in institutional governance and decision-making, productivity, efficiency, additional time spent on campus, additional voluntary responsibilities sought or accepted all increase with significant positive impact on the quality of institutional operation, both in the form of value added service and outright savings. Certainly, it is hard to dispute that when one feels personally and professionally respected and appreciated, one tends to exert oneself towards a common goal with greater enthusiasm and effort.

In this context, one study of faculty at 265 two-year colleges o determine the effect of their involvement in college or institutional governance on their teaching process reported that faculty that were involved in governance had significantly improved attitudes towards teaching and students and were more motivated to enter into institutional life beyond or in addition to teaching (Miller 51-61) .

This concept is well supported by research in related fields There are numerous parallels in the corporate and industrial worlds, where companies have involved staff groups in corporate decisions resulting in considerably improved operations. These include Japanese quality circles and Volvo's pioneering manufacturing methods, to give just two examples.

There is clear consensus between the literature concerning higher education and that of generic organization theory which supports the conclusion that faculty participation in institutional decision-making results in an increase in faculty satisfaction and participation. The literature of general organization theory shows conclusively that participation in organizational decision-making improves staff satisfaction and performance (Floyd).

The benefits of shared governance redound in many ways, including higher institutional standards. Some evidence has been developed in a survey of 30 California community colleges to indicate that faculty who have served in a faculty senate support with greater conviction the need for strong academic standards and for high levels of expectation in demanding courses than those who did not have such experience (Poland and Villanueva 50).

More support for the Fourth Paradigm comes from college administrators themselves. The literature produced by professional associations of community college administrators concludes that, in addition to integrity and intellectual honesty:

> 1. The most important ability [for an effective college administrator] appears to be strong interpersonal skills
> 2. College administrators must move toward more open and less inhibiting methods of reaching decisions in order to provide opportunities for faculty . . . to become involved in leadership (Garavalia and Miller 4).

"Qualified, but not complete, support is found for the belief that lack of faculty influence in institutional decision-making causes faculty unionization." It can be inferred from this article that failure to include faculty in decision-making causes faculty alienation, and that such failure is a significant cause of that all too familiar downward spiral of faculty demoralization that afflicts many institutions of higher education (Zirkel 7).

This is echoed in Slaughter and Broussal's "Collegiality and the California Community Colleges. The authors state that "community colleges need the collegial ideal of shared authority," and that ". . . the role of faculty must be enhanced" To continue to govern in a "business as usual" manner with a small group of faculty activists taking part in governance through the collective bargaining process "will result in a strong adversarial presence in management-faculty relations and little institutional loyalty among teachers. The situation could deteriorate further if academic senates and faculty committees fail to play a significant role in governance."

The optimum organizational model would have faculty participating "in a full range of organizational processes," with "a shift in the locus of the teachers' role from the periphery to the centers of decision making and policy formation." Administrators and faculty surveyed agreed that collegiality (ie: faculty participation in institutional governance) is not merely a nicety, but a critical element in institutional success (Slaughter and Broussal 17).

In all of the literature surveyed, little negative data surfaced. There were brief references to "less than desired" or disappointing results at a few institutions where joint faculty-administration committees had been formed to effect major decisions but "had not lived up to expectations." These included Northwestern, Princeton, Ohio University and Teacher's College, Columbia University. These were not elaborated on and more data was not forthcoming at the time of presentation of this paper (Yamada).

In at least one instance though, seemingly positive, supportive research needs to be questioned. A national survey found 91% of colleges and universities have [some type of] a participative governance body. (Gilmore 16-18), This statistic needs to be questioned. The word "participative" covers a wide range of meaning and, more commonly than not, has little to do with genuine shared governance. Frequently, these participative bodies take the form of "College Assemblies," often called just that, and are comprised of students as well as faculty and administration. These bodies usually have little or no real governing power, their decisions are not binding, and they exert influence in only a narrow area of operations such as approving new course offerings or other routine matters that at some institutions have already gone through a gauntlet of administrative filters and reviews. Operating in the manner of a glorified student government association, the typical college assembly really has no substantive role and certainly no power regarding professional matters of institutional governance and decision-making. Often its principal function is to provide an extra-classroom demonstration or game simulation of governance as a learning experience for students and to placate faculty into compliance by creating the impression of shared decision-making.

Overall, the record is positive where genuine shared governance, has been instituted. While not making a case for acceptance and implementation at every academic institution, the literature does establish that the issue of shared governance has credibility as a serious, realistic option that needs to be examined carefully both in terms of the individual institution and in the light of available research data and national trends before an informed decision can be reached.

Analysis and Prognosis

The previous discussion of the literature has shown that the faculty senate concept is not only a viable and credible one, but also a well established medium for shared governance with a record of success, particularly at community colleges. This does not mean that such a device will work everywhere. The question is whether there is a need and a place for a faculty senate at Middlesex County College.

A detailed discussion of internal affairs at Middlesex is deemed outside the scope of this paper. However, the following is a brief summary of relevant information bearing on the issue of a need for a faculty senate at Middlesex. There is extensive faculty disenchantment or dissatisfaction with college operation. Compounding this disenchantment and perhaps part of the cause is a problem with communications between administration and faculty. Important information regarding institutional decision making does not flow back and forth between the two groups effectively. The result is a lack of meaningful dialogue, partnership, and collaboration between the two in operating the institution. Like a car with the emergency brake on, this situation is impeding the progress and effective operation of the institution.

Based on an examination of the facts of the current situation, the conclusion and the answer to the question raised above regarding the need for a faculty senate has to be a decided yes. Middlesex represents a classic or textbook case of an academic institution that needs and would be served extremely well by a faculty senate. The Senate has the potential to create the partnership that is currently lacking, to facilitate communications between faculty and administration, and to improve the general operation of the institution and its delivery of service to the community.

The questions then become: Can the Senate and the Administration form a positive working relationship? What are some possible scenarios for that relationship?

A positive collaboration between the two groups seems eminently possible. Interviews with the Middlesex faculty indicate that the senate is viewed as a positive development, as an invitation to set up an improved working relationship with administration for the betterment of the institution. Enthusiasm and optimism are strongly evidenced.

The nature and form of that relationship or partnership has not yet been explored. According to one of its officers, the Middlesex Faculty Senate views itself, for now, as an advisory body. Its goal is to establish a working relationship where administration will routinely seek and consider its opinions and recommendations on a range of policy and planning matters relating to the operation and governance of the college. That this is a realistic and reasonable objective is supported by a study in 1996 of shared governance at over 100 institutions, in which respondents strongly agreed:

> that an ideal governance process utilizes a faculty advisory board [or senate] as conduit through which faculty participation is solicited and that institutional procedures involve faculty input early in the decision-making process.

The task now is to design the form or structure for this cooperative relationship.

In one model for this, the administration would brief faculty senate members, in writing or in person, on major policy and planning matters under consideration, but well before any administrative decision has been reached. The Senate would then establish a faculty recommendation or position and transmit this back to administration. .

A simpler, easier, and more comprehensive model would include a member of the Faculty Senate on all administrative policy and planning committees. The faculty member would have the right to participate in all deliberations and to express faculty positions and points of view, which would be considered but be non-binding on Administration.

The faculty member would then promptly report on these latest developments to the Senate. The Senate could subsequently poll the faculty-at-large, apprising them of pending planning or policy matters and asking for response, which would then be collated and reduced to a formal faculty senate position and transmitted to Administration.

This procedure would create a situation where all major policy, planning, and other operational decisions being considered by Administration would be presented to the Faculty Senate in a timely fashion allowing for legitmate polling, review and response. Such current policy and planning data is the kind of information the faculty rarely hears about, often for the most innocuous reasons such as that someone was too busy, but even more so, because there is no established mechanism to do it.

Campus communications, almost overnight, could be transformed to a state of comprehensive immediacy, and without any significant additional work by administration. The Faculty Senate would perform this function. The Senate would take on the responsibility of reporting to faculty on all developments to which, as a shared or co-governor, it was included. .The success of this partnership would require the administration to provide full, timely, good faith disclosure of all relevant data.

In this working relationship, faculty would be involved only in the large policy and planning decisions. Routine, logistical matters such as, for example, where and from whom to obtain supplies from would be a matter for Purchasing to handle and not something necessary to involve the faculty. In this manner, the new shared governance process need not slow down operations. This second model described above is simple and workable.

Additionally, there are a number of reasons why Administration might find the Senate a useful ally. The Senate would provide additional expertise and the opportunity for preliminary field testing of proposals prior to their implementation. It could assure a consensus prior to implementation that would have the potential to eliminate or minimize discontent, demoralization, and alienation.. It could give all members of the professional college community a sense of investment, of ownership, of a personal responsibility that fosters renewed care, enthusiasm, commitment and effort on the part of faculty members. This rejuvenated connection to the college, as the literature testifies, would increase productivity and efficiency. It has the potential to allow Administration to achieve its desired goals more easily through consensus rather than by fiat and, in the process, make Administration's job easier and more positive.

Honest and timely communication between the two major groups responsible for operation of the institution, the faculty and the administration, is essential. Yet, there is no standard, reliable mechanism for this at Middlesex. The College Assembly does not provide this service, due to its diluted, "student activities" nature. What is needed is a formal body that speaks for the faculty on non-contract, but professional concerns, that is, on academic and institutional governance matters.

The AFT affiliated faculty union at Middlesex is not in a position to remedy this because, as stated above, many of these faculty concerns and responsibilities involve professional matters that are not contractual in nature and not the subject of collective bargaining and lie outside the scope of the union. More, the literature strongly recommends that shared institutional governance matters and contractual matters (such as employment, salary and other traditionally union or negotiable matters of work conditions) be kept separate.

Neither is the involvement of the Union particularly appropriate here because there is a larger context. Faculty have legitimate academic concerns regarding institutional operation that go far beyond employment or contract matters. These concerns go to the heart, to the special nature that comprises an institution of higher learning.

The academic institution, the university, initially emerged because learned individuals gathered together to teach each other and to teach others. They functioned for centuries in that way as a loose association whose object was not material goods but learning. One could cite Plato and Aristotle; one could point to the formation of Cambridge and Oxford or the Sorbonne. In all of these and countless more, the college, the university, was the faculty and the faculty was the college. If the purpose and the product of the institution was learning, then the faculty were the heart, the center of operations; they were the source of standards, goals, and decisions, and others were there to support them. In the modern college or university, this means that boards of trustees and administration are there to support faculty who are the center of a college or university. . The faculty are the ones to decide how to best grow and nurture the institution. .

It is this special nature of the academic institution that makes the corporate/industrial model of hierarchical or top-down management inappropriate. The entire purpose, the raison d'etre of the corporation is to create profit. The corporate organization is a money machine, entirely mechanistic in nature, geared to produce a quantifiable product. The staff are workers, parts, cogs in the machine. But the faculty in an academic institution are not merely workers, parts, human cogs in a peopled machine. Given its special, unique nature, the academic institution is the faculty and the faculty is the institution. In this sense, community colleges are approaching education backwards and doomed to be second rate, even within their own context, bound to fail to realize their fullest potential, if they do not honor the primary role of faculty.

Middlesex has a window of opportunity in the development of the Faculty Senate to elevate the quality of and the atmosphere that surrounds its operation. It is a real opportunity to establish a working relationship, a collegiality, a sense of shared responsibility in an atmosphere of genuine cooperation and mutual respect, and in the process take the institution itself to new levels of effectiveness. On a operational level, the faculty senate would be key to this new collegiality by providing the logistical mechanism for regular and timely transfer of information between the two major groups responsible for college operation

The merits of shared governance, particularly through the medium of a faculty senate are pervasive in the literature. Field research, surveys of faculty and administrative opinion, and studies of colleges where shared governance has been instituted all document not only that it works, but that it may well be an essential component of institutional success. As Slaughter and Broussal assert, based on a consensus of faculty and administrators interviewed or surveyed:

> "unless collegiality becomes the norm of an institution's operational method, that institution will never reach its full potential or even be able to pursue its mission in an efficient and productive manner.

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A Journey With Students

Into
African American Literature and Culture

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Enter a county college classroom, and there stands a middle-aged white woman professor before a small group of white and African American students. Listen for a few minutes while discussion centers upon Frederick Douglass' resourceful techniques for learning to read and write while a young slave in Baltimore or upon his lashings on the plantations; Harriet Jacobs' constant savvy and vigilance to avoid her owner's lecherous advances and secure her children's future; Zora Neale Hurston's pride in being colored; or Amiri Baraka's poetry of both revelation and rage in the sixties. One may wonder how in this African American Literature class does she happen to be teaching it; what are the highlights, difficulties, and questions; and what are the dynamics in and out of the classroom that help sustain it.

The following narrative account presents and assesses one white woman's journey from a point of intellectual deprivation and dissatisfaction toward increased knowledge and a consequent determination to enlighten others so as to reduce the ignorance regarding America's literary and cultural heritage. Such teaching requires a continued immersion in African American texts and ongoing attempts to better understand an everchanging and diverse culture that is not innately one's own. Some of the delights and difficulties will be noted as well as a few suggestions for easing classroom academic problems(some commonplace in community college 200-level literature classes but possibly compounded in this context), plus ideas for connecting the African American literature professor and students with the extended African American college community.

Scattered over a period of almost twenty years, the teaching of American Literature classes, while intellectually stimulating in contrast to English 101 or 102 materials, became, essentially a static exercise. To an occasional question as to why there were no or few women studied, I responded that women were seldom educated as were the more privileged men and indicated that in earlier times marriage and children allowed slight temporal space for creative activities. Minorities were scarcely contemplated, again presuming widespread illiteracy.

Unwittingly, I continued and even presently must conscientiously work to counter the tradition that James W. Loewen exposes in his 1995 book Lies My Teacher Told Me, regarding what he cites and illustrates in Chapters 5 and 6 as the "absence of white racism" and the "invisibility of antiracism" in American history textbooks and classes(137-199). Only in the early 1980's did a short story by Richard Wright ("Almos' a Man"), James Baldwin ("Sonny's Blues"), Toni Cade Bambara ("My Man Bovanne"), or Alice Walker ("Everyday Use") creep into short story and multi-genre literature anthologies, as did some poetry in the latter. Not until the last half of the 80's when teaching World Literature in an interdisciplinary program did I first encounter Frederick Douglass's Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself(1845) and was both mesmerized and stunned by its revelations of subhuman conditions, its torturous cruelties, administered by masters and occasionally mistresses, Southerners who frequently professed themselves devout Christians, sometimes praying as they lashed backs till the blood flowed; in juxtaposition, soared the curiosity, precocity, the brilliance of the narrator himself.

Early in 1991, planning to teach American Literature in an early summer night course, a College English cover caught my eye: "`American` Literature-R.I.P.," the actual article by Gregory S. Jay entitled "The End of `American` Literature: Toward a Multicultural Practice." Therein, Jay wrote of "undoing the canon" and that "syllabi and critical studies could be focused around contestation rather than unity" and referred to Gerald Graff's principle of "teaching the conflicts"(271). On the first page of the same College English issue was a full page describing an NCTE Summer Institute for Teachers of Literature in Myrtle Beach, which had as its main speakers Barbara Christian, Gerald Graff, and Robert Scholes. I sent in an application and later received a weighty packet of scholarly essays and a must-read of Beloved by Toni Morrison, the homework to be completed prior to attendance. At the conference itself, Graff described instances of professorial sparring within classes which elicited the desired participation of the students. It was Barbara Christian, who at Berkeley directed, I believe, African American Studies, who captured our attention as an amazing teacher and dynamic person and, significantly, for me, mentioned in a small group discussion that Norton would soon be publishing an African American Literature text, and she would be a contributing editor.

Two years later, in preparation for participation in the NCTE 1993 Summer Institute focusing upon "Rethinking American Literature: To What End?", the participants' reading list included an article from the fall 1983 issue of Feminist Studies by Paul Lauter entitled "Race and Gender in the Shaping of the American Literary Canon *A Case*

Study from the Twenties." As in Toni Bambara's "The Lesson," in which the teacher Miss Moore must lead the feisty star of her summer "school children" to anger to effect a change; and so this article affected me. Lauter's article generated a shock and a sense of betrayal as he clarified that a few hundred white male humanities professors across the country (28) had made decisions regarding content for American Literature texts "for two generations [40 years] or more," so that "literary professionals brought up under the influence of formalist criticism knew little or nothing of the work or writers outside the hardening canon"(35). At another point, Lauter notes that "it took fifteen years after Brown v. Board of Education [1954] and a decade after the sit-ins [to begin] to achieve even token representation of black writers in contemporary anthologies. . . . Thus, as the NCTE survey accurately shows, by the end of the 1950's, one could study American literature and read no work by a black writer, few works by women except Dickinson and perhaps Marianne Moore or Katherine Anne Porter, and no work about lives or experiences of working-class people"(26-27). Such were the springboards into supplementing my education and my attempting to advert such a skewed education for current Ocean County College students in regard to this specific literary heritage.

At the 1995 NCTE Summer Institute focusing upon "Teaching African American Literature: Theory and Practice," where for the first time about 25% (rather than 2-3%) of the attendees were African American, I decided to test the waters.

At the first Monday luncheon in sunny South Carolina, I seated myself at a table across from an African American woman of about my age and next to a young African American woman. After preliminary exchanges, I told them I was considering teaching an African American Literature class at Ocean County College and asked them what they thought of my teaching such a course. The woman from California, across from me, looked me straight in the eye and asked, "Isn't there anyone else?" I explained that we had no African Americans in the English department and that an African American with a Ph.D. in the Northeast would probably first seek employment and often find it at four-year colleges and universities. The young woman to my right, teaching at a college in Columbus, Ohio, responded in a precise and lively manner, believing that I should pursue it; however, it would require extensive reading, research to understand the history, nuances, and cultural references within the literature. Indeed, during the next forty-eight hours of the conference, the key conference leaders Bernard Bell of Pennsylvania State University and Trudier Harris of Emory (now of the University of North Carolina) emphasized those precise ideas, that with thorough and continual preparation whites could teach such courses, if dedicated to being steeped in the African American literature and culture.

During the next sixteen months, I presented the idea to my Dean and began creating a proposal which was then approved by the Curriculum Committee to be on temporary status before gaining catalogue status. Attempts to teach the course in the spring of 1997 and again in the fall of 1998 were cancelled due to insufficient enrollment; the fall of 1999 ten students enrolled but only seven stayed the course: one young white male disappeared quickly; one young black female left before the first essay was due; and a white female, a young wife and mother left shortly after an extended family vacation in Cancun. The interest of the remaining students was genuine and the discussions often lively; their reading habits, however, were inconsistent (only two were scholarly and three becoming so); and with two or three exceptions, their essay writing too infrequently engaged the literary content and was sometimes blurred by diction and mechanical errors. The following semester, one twenty-something African American male(one of those becoming so) left me an informal typewritten note:

> Dear Professor Hatcher,
>
> I just wanted to write and let you know that your course was very turning point in how I looked at, not only African American History, but also American History. It, in the beginning, forced me to read, but essentially created a love for reading. Courses in the past were interesting and some even fun, but AAL was a course that filled an empty space in me, that wasn't satisfied with public school education. Writing letters is not an easy thing as you already know, but letting you know that your course was very fulfilling is an easy thing to do. Currently, I'm reading "Black Boy", by Richard Wright. It doesn't entertain as much as "The Street", but it touches the inner conflict and hunger that always plagues him from time to time. My favorite is around page 88 and he is standing around listening to his friends complain about America. Again, thank you for teaching the course and I hope that you continue to.

When applying for my sabbatical and for the Mid-Career Fellowship Program in the fall of 1999, I expected through course work to extend my knowledge of African American literature. Last fall term 2000, my stimulating course through Princeton's English Department, From the Plantation to the Penitentiary: Interpretation, Literature, and the Law, probed law cases, plus numerous authors, among them, John Locke, Michel Foucault, Jeremy Bentham, and a current philosopher Giorgio Agamben. We read only one book by an African American, Mumia Abu-Jamal's Live from Death Row, but studied sections of books and several periodical essays by Blacks (I use African Americans and Blacks interchangeably in class as appears to be the current practice). It was the law cases, particularly, that provided insight into socio-political–legal contexts for the various literary periods and authors studied by my students, precise information that has been a constructive addition in both my Introduction to Literature and African American Literature classes. The Dred Scott v. Sanford (1857) case in which Chief Justice Taney, gathering bits and pieces of dated states' laws supposedly producing "evidence" reducing the slave to a non-citizen status, halted the limited shift that had begun after 1776 and with the later writing of the Constitution of acknowledging in several sectors the former slave as free. Although during the Civil War and through 1875 some laws began reparation, in 1883 the Supreme Court, relying heavily on Taney's decision in Dred Scott, overturned the Civil Rights Act of 1875, and thus began the long slide until the 1960's. Having given a class presentation on the Dred Scott case and studied the 1883 case, plus numerous others, strengthened my ability in the African American Spring 2001 class to clarify the context for various authors' voices and views through the 1800's to more contemporary times.

This spring's class as a whole delighted me. The sexes were equally divided, as were whites and ones of color; the ages ranged from eighteen to sixty-something. Three-fifths of the class were proficient, thoughtful readers and solid writers, a significant difference from my 1999 class. With some exceptions from class to class, from student to student, they read their assignments and attended class prepared to discuss. In the last three or four weeks, unfortunately, due to varied personal problems, one of the African American males left the course and another's work and attendance slackened. Considering the reading unpreparedness of the 1999 class, this spring for the first assignment, I assigned from the Norton text a few spirituals to read and a sheet with a question regarding each to be completed for the following class. With differing sensitivities all responded and class conversation flowed. A similar technique was applied later in relation to folktales and to the poetry of Langston Hughes: they were to read tales totaling three to four pages from about fourteen pages, write brief responses and present at least one in class; and from twenty-four Hughes' poems, they were to select three, write briefly and present one to the class. That day in late March when each student clarified his/her often perceptive response to a poem by Hughes was one highlight of the semester; each selected a different poem, and all were most sensitive to the others' responses. During the earlier weeks when they began reading the Norton excerpts from two slave narratives, first Olaudah Equiano and then Harriet Jacobs, I employed a more effective technique than in 1999 for these lengthier works. I assigned the class the twenty-five to thirty-five pages for each work. After they had read the material, I divided them into three groups and designated about eight pages of concentration for each group. Without exception, the students eagerly exchanged observations, then divided the pages I had assigned among themselves so that in the subsequent class each student would share pertinent points regarding a limited section with the entire class. When each spoke to the other nine, he/she appeared empowered by the prior group conversations. Later when addressing Douglass' Narrative, no groups were formed, but their reading habits and early speaking experiences led to contributions that in most cases related solid details and illustrations, engendered discussion which continued to occur through authors such as David Walker, Booker T.Washington, W. E. B.DuBois, Charles W. Chestnutt. The small group technique was used specifically again in preparation for an essay regarding Ann Petry's novel The Street and again in the last two weeks when students selected two authors from a list of ten contemporary writers; students paired or tripled, discussing ideas regarding their common authors before completing their final essay. Reflecting upon the spring semester, I realize that a combination of the students' interest and preparedness, the emphasis upon grouping and brief individual presentations, and the students' general mutual respect for one another created consistently some of most stimulating class sessions I have experienced at OCC.

Early in March in my preparation for a local TV interview regarding this class, one that had been arranged at the suggestion of the Director of Multicultural Services at OCC, I asked the students to respond to five questions, focusing upon their assessment of the class at that time so that I might represent them when discussing the class in the interview. Unfortunately, this day had the lowest attendance of the semester: three absent, one arrived too late to complete all of the questions, another student preferred to submit responses later. Some of the others did not fully complete their responses and most did not understand question four, presenting the **skills** concept.

(A sampling follows, as written.)

1. What new ideas and insights have you acquired/experienced? – at least two examples.

   I have acquired new insights about the real life of a slave. Reading the stories about Harriett Jacobs, Frederick Douglas and Aquino have changed my views somewhat. There was a time that I didn't want to hear about slavery or see portrayed because I would become angry. I know realize that I would have missed out on a lot of great information, which will help me to see my own race better and renew a since of pride.

   I had no idea of the wealth and breadth of African-American Literature. The fact that some very compelling and unforgettable writing came out of the slave experience of the 18th century is a miracle in itself. Phyllis Wheatley produced beautiful, expressive poetry when she was only in her teens. Frederick Douglass also gave his account of slavery based on his own experience and life.

2. What are some conditions and experiences that writers revealed that particularly impressed you?

   Some of the Authors have battled through the hardest of things on their way to writing these pieces. Such as Harriet Jacobos who lived in a tiny shack for 7 years barely being able to move. She escaped slavery, Death, rape Just to find her freedom. It is a truly Beutiful thing.

   The description of his capture in Africa and the agonizing brutality and inhumanity of the Middle Passage as described by Olaudah Equiano is something I'll never forget. But the fact that he learned to read and write so articulately is amazing. To have an eyewitness account of such a shameful past of history by a victim of it who lived through it and tell his story is most valuable.

3. Would you recommend this course to others? Why?

   I would recommend this course to every student at O.C.C. and all acquaintances.

   I would definitely recommend the course because we don't know enough about some great people. It could help people to understand the African American race more; even today. That's important, because they are part of the world. We have so much history about whites, lets hear some about others.

4. What skills does this course develop and strengthen?

   This course develops reading skills tremendously. You are inclined to really look into certain words and quotes. It strengthens writing skills. You find yourself having many opinions and beliefs due to the readings, and it leads to thorough insightful writing.

5. What changes, additions, or recommendations would you suggest for the remainder of the course and future courses?

   I do very much like this class, I feel it has opened new doors to my soul, However, I feel as though to much time has been spend on listening and reading (?) specific details. I wish we could pull the desks into a circle and talk about what the writings do for us. We have an opportunity to really dig into the words and feelings of the authors. We also have the opportunity to explore the different types of people in this class. I myself have never had 4 African Amercans in any of my classes. I want to hear the views on these subjects. I would like more feeling and less writing.

   Not many changes are necessary. I guess, if anything, to make sure it is always a very opinionated class where everyone can talk as deep as they like and can express their feelings on certain subjects. This is done, we just have to make sure it continues.

My comment and assessment on the previous page regarding the spring semester was, obviously, a professor's perspective, and as is indicated in responses 4 and 5 above, nearing semester's mid-point, attitudes between at least two students regarding reading and writing were conflicting. Two white males were resistant to writing the essays required (there was no test over content and only two quizzes) and one of them had come to the class with a preconceived idea of what the class should be: some composite of a sociology class and touchy-feely therapy session – as suggested in the first response to question five. Their resistance was expressed to me out of class or once or twice immediately after class; therefore, class sessions remained focused. The irony of the white male's response for #5 was that there were continual vibrant exchanges discussing the literature, a joy in sharing ideas regardless of the ever-changing composition of the groups. When not in the smaller groups, as professor, I probe the works and question, seldom lecture or profess, and do not dominate floor time but definitely guide, analyze, and focus discussion.

Earlier I cited the euphoric atmosphere when Hughes' poetry was discussed. Not always was there unanimous consensus, nor agreement; all ten students had distinct personalities and capably expressed their ideas. One of the last discussions prior to final student presentations opened some of Baraka's 6o's poems to heated exchanges, especially after my reading of his "Black Art." One older Jewish student who remembered the 60's Baraka on the streets of Newark, took exception to Baraka's racial slurs. This student and two others argued their merit, necessity of his words and images, discussing when was anger hate. One young man thought there ought to be other methods to effect change, ways to talk together which was countered by another white male, talking generally about repressed peoples past and present around the world fighting back, leading the previous speaker to say, surprisingly, that he always thought there should be a revolution every two hundred years or so. I suggested, indeed, Baraka's poem was an element of the sixties' revolution. Unfortunately, the Black students were essentially ignored during these exchanges.

As I contemplate teaching next fall's African American class, in addition to what procedures I have detailed within, I will incorporate some of the following activities and recommend them to others.

Suggestions for first sessions in an African American Literature class:

> **1. The professor, particularly if white, might clarify why he/she is teaching this course and how prepared because the students sense, I believe, even if some colleagues do not that the African American culture may not be best represented by one who is white. A colleague might say that we teach a French or Russian story. True. If we were to teach that story in France or Russia, however, we might be more cognizant of our historical/cultural distance from the student body.**
>
> **I begin my class the first day explaining my journey to this point, as begun on page two.**
>
> **2. Trudier Harris at the 1995 NCTE Conference suggested putting on the board the first day all racial terms, slurs, slang that might be appropriate and offensive. I would suggest not only terms related to Blacks but all races.**
>
> **3. After introducing the syllabus, text, requirements, and our own expectations, ask students what their expectations are for this particular class. Why did they take the course, besides the fact of receiving Diversity credit?**
>
> **4. If professors expect thesis-driven essays, then prior to the first essay, at least one class should be devoted to discussing essay structure and content appropriate for a 200-level literature class. Students may be of varied ages, be from various areas of the country, and have had dissimilar writing experiences.**

Suggestions that may increase enrollment in the African American class, connect students and professor with AA activities on campus, and increase cultural understanding:

> **1. Professor contact the African American club sponsor(s) and discuss mutual concerns and interests. My contact last fall was most receptive.**

2. Professor and AAL students attend the African American club meetings and participate in their programs and activities. At OCC, the Organization of Black Unity (OBU) is open to all students. Just a few of their activities besides weekly meetings (attendance dwindled after Black History month) are Harvest Day, a gathering of all clubs on campus, each person contributing a dish; Food Drop-collection of food for Thanksgiving meals for the needy; Talent Show, etc.

3. Professor and students communicate with the Multicultural Services Office. At OCC, personnel have encouraged students to enroll in the AAL class. They also present and sponsor programs throughout the year, sponsor a Soul Food Luncheon in the spring, and this year planned their first bus trip to Harlem. One of the key persons in the Office was also co-sponsor of OBU this year. In addition, the Director introduced me to a local African American TV personality who has had her own interview show week evenings for years. She requested an interview with me and ran the program three evenings.

4. Possibly prepare papers or round table discussions that might be presented during Black History Month.

5. Professor generate ideas or be alert for AA speakers/scholars on campus and in the classroom itself.

6. Professor become better informed regarding conferences, workshops, speakers, theater, etc. in the surrounding communities as well as national possibilities that professor and/or students might attend.

During this summer while reading, reconfiguring the fall AAL syllabus, sifting through strengths/weaknesses of past classes, questions will remain and tease the mind as Cheryl L. Johnson discusses in her 1994 article "Participatory Rhetoric and the Teacher as Racial/Gendered Subject." She wonders if she is "'read' as a representation of essentialized black womanhood" (410), as a "mammy, maid, [or] welfare queen" (412). Had a white male student come to her office saying he could not complete the reading of

James Baldwin's Go Tell It on the Mountain since his father had suffered the violence of black men, expecting her to fulfill the "mammy role" being "nurturing and caring" (412-413)? Had a white female student come crying, saying she could not complete Gayl Jones's Corregidora because of its "sexual degradation and psychological abuse," expecting Johnson to share "the vulnerability of our bodies?" (414). Johnson writes, "The questions I continue to ask myself about the social construction of the student's gaze, the body as text, the spoken/written text(s) as text, and the perils of participatory rhetoric occasion my attempts to continue my interior/exterior dialogue with myself and others about these issues" (410). What interpretations exist in the "racial/gendered body" (412) of an older white woman professor teaching African American Literature? Would the white males in the spring class have challenged a black male or female professor's writing requirements? Does my whiteness silence questions and arguments of the blacks or does my womanliness encourage more expression than any male figure might?

As this writing begins to sound of Prufrock, I will not hesitate, rather with the cool breeze of autumn thrust open the door to the next class of students eager to assimilate what they cannot in any other class on campus.

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Challenges to the Brick and Mortar of the Community Colleges

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May, 2001

The generations of young people who are now entering early adulthood have been born into the Information Age. They are comfortable using electronic equipment—personal computers, wireless telephones, personal digital assistants, and so on. They can easily "surf the net" with all its interactivity. In fact it almost seems that they have an intuitive grasp of these electronic tools. It is these generations that are now entering the community colleges, both as the traditional first-time freshman of about eighteen years of age and also as the older part-timer (where older implies an age of twenty four or more). These students have new opportunities because of the Information Age. In particular they can access education without being limited by time or place; that is, they can study through the virtual institutions.

The main market for the student who takes courses at the virtual institution is certainly not the first-time freshman that enters college wanting the college experience of perhaps studying away from home, fraternizing with peers, and enjoying the college facilities. As summarized by Gregory C. Farrington, president of Lehigh University, in the essay "The New Technologies and the Future of Residential Undergraduate Education" (Dancing with the Devil, Jossey-Bass Inc., San Francisco, CA, 1999, pp. 83-84), the market is more nearly the over-twenty-four- year-old who is employed and has decided to continue with an education part-time either because she has come to realize that an education is fulfilling or that her employment mandates it. Part-time students make up about half the population of the New Jersey community colleges; it also is the group that is most successful in courses delivered on-line. If the community colleges lose ground in holding on to even some of this population, then the community colleges' growth rate will be compromised. Moreover the community college should be able to reach out and service not only this population that it currently attracts, but also a new population that may not have taken college courses before—those who have indeed been limited by time and place. This new population could then serve to accelerate rather than decelerate enrollment at the community colleges.

How can the community college hold on to its population and in fact grow it? With imagination and initiative, there are many ways, one of the most promising being the hybrid course that interleaves campus and distance education. But before looking for solutions, it is important to understand distance education and the challenges that the virtual institutions present.

What Is Distance Education and Is It Here to Stay? Those of us who have been involved with the community colleges over the last several decades have seen the development of many different forms of delivering courses at a distance. We have been aware of the correspondence courses offered by proprietary institutions. We have participated in "sunrise semesters" in which courses were delivered via television to students before the beginning of the workday. We have wrestled with telecourses where students either watched course segments broadcast on television several times during the week or viewed videotapes of the segments on a weekly basis at their convenience. We have endured interactive TV where college lectures were broadcast live to off-campus locations. Now we are faced with delivery over the Internet.

In a course so delivered, students download information for study. The information most likely contains a syllabus and may also contain course lectures and links to related websites. There may be reading assignments. There may also be projects and homework that the student submits via email to the professor. Students interact with each other, either asynchronously by email and bulletin boards, or synchronously via chat rooms. The professor corresponds with students possibly through email, or electronic bulletin boards, or chat rooms or online conferencing.

With respect to this type of delivery, we may be tempted to wave our hands and say, "We've seen it all before. There will be a lot of hype and then the concept will be relegated to one or two courses lost somewhere in the pages of the college catalog." But that would be a very grievous mistake. To understand why, you must first realize that the tools of on-line education—access to the Internet and the use of electronic communication--are already commonplace in our society. Students expect to access information on the web, even in traditionally taught classroom courses. For example, in a recent ethics class at Princeton University, the professor projected a newspaper article for class discussion; the first reaction from a student was to ask if he had to make notes from the article or would the instructor post it on the website for the course.

Next you have to observe the growth of interest in distance education. Here are some examples:

- In a paper entitled "Virtual Universities" (Learning in a Global Information Society, Issue 10, September 1996), Professor Paul Bacsich, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, marveled at the growth:

  > "It seems that 1996 is the year of Virtual Universities. There are already over 200 hits on the World Wide Web matching the phrase "Virtual University"."

  Just five years later (in 2001) if you enter that phrase in the search engine Northern Light, you will get 1,068,280 hits!
- According to a news release by the State University New York, the SUNY Learning Network expected 20,000 enrollments in its distance-learning program in September 2000, exceeding the previous year's enrollment by 7000. The program began five years earlier with only 119 students. (http://www.suny.edu/SUNY_News/000926-2)
- Student enrollment at Kentucky Virtual University increased more than 900% in just one year; there were 235 students in Fall 1999 and 2372, in Fall 2000. In addition to the students residing in Kentucky, there were students from 19 other states and four foreign countries. (http://www.kyvu.org/)
- A quick perusal of the web site for The Electronic Campus of the Southern Regional Education Board http://www.electroniccampus.org/ which offers distance-learning courses from educational institutes in sixteen Southern states shows that 291 colleges, universities, and technical institutions are presently members. A December 1, 1998 press release (http://www.electroniccampus.org/) states that 15,000 students were participating in more than 900 courses; a year before, only 140 courses were offered.

Thus it is evident that there is a tremendous interest in on-line education and that the virtual institutions are indeed growing at a phenomenal rate.

Who are the Virtual Institutions? There are at least five different types of institutions that offer virtual courses. The one with which we are probably most familiar is the traditional "brick-and-mortar" university, college, or community college. These not-for-profit institutions have long been the disseminators of education and the grantors of degrees. Some of them, like Regis University, Denver, Colorado, founded in 1877, continue to offer traditional on-campus programs while also offering on-line degrees (http://www.regisonline.org/).

Others of the "brick-and-mortars" have banded together and formed virtual universities or virtual campuses. Table 1 lists the web sites of thirteen of them. In such cases, the offerings of the institution consist of a catalog of distance learning courses at member institutions. As an example, consider the New Jersey Virtual University NJVU.

New Jersey Virtual University provides an index to over 1,300 credit and noncredit distance learning courses offered by 42 of the state's public and independent higher education institutions. The index also includes more than 40 complete degree and certificate programs, at the undergraduate and graduate level. While NJVU itself does not grant degrees (http://www.njvu.org/), the member institutions do grant them. Examples of participating institutions are New Jersey Institute of Technology, Caldwell College, and Thomas Edison State College.

The New Jersey Virtual Community College (NJVCC), an outgrowth of NJVU, coordinates distance learning for the nineteen community colleges in New Jersey. County College of Morris in Randolph, New Jersey, is an example.

Another type of virtual institution, although not-for-profit, has corporate partners as well as traditional brick-and-mortar educational institutions. Western Governors University was founded by the governors of several western states (excluding California). It offers degrees and certificates in several fields. These credentials are "competency-based" rather than credit based (http://www.wgu.edu/). A student shows that he has mastered the tasks required by the degree; he can do that by demonstrating what he has learned either through life/job experience or college courses (which he can take through the on-line offerings of the University's "education providers"). The "education providers" include community colleges, large public universities, small private colleges, and America's leading corporations. Some of the educational members are University of Colorado-Boulder, University of Hawaii, and Santa Fe Community College. Some of the corporate members are AT&T, Cisco Systems, Novell, and Sun Microsystems.

Still another type of distant learning comes from corporate sites, particularly those in technology; for example Microsoft Corporation offers certification in its product line through examinations. One can study for those examinations with Microsoft certified professional approved study guides (books, CD-ROMs, online and video formats). (http://www.microsoft.com/trainingandservices).

Yet another type of distant learning source is the for-profit centers. These corporations offer a variety of courses usually for specific software products. Keystone Learning Systems is one such company. Keystone presently offers 229 self paced computer training courses on its website (http://www.keystonelearning.com/) such as Visual Basic 6, Java 2, and Active Server Pages. Keystone advertises being a Microsoft Certified Solution Provider, a Corel Solutions Partner, and a Lotus affiliate. Keystone offers certification from several software companies.

And last, but certainly not least, is the for-profit virtual university category such as the University of Phoenix. Founded in 1989, the University of Phoenix offers degrees that can be completed on-line in accounting, administration, business, education, management, marketing, nursing/health care, and technology. With over 19,000 students enrolled, University of Phoenix is the largest private university, enrolling degree-seeking adults from all over the United States and the world. Each of its courses has a duration of five or six weeks, so that students take one course at a time. A professional with not less than a Master's degree leads each course (uofponline.com).

Marketing by the Distant Learning Providers. Education is big business; for-profit educational institutions are already a 3.5 billion dollars per year business with a growth rate of more than ten percent ("Assessing the New Competitive Landscape", Dancing with the Devil, Jossey-Bass Inc, San Francisco, 1999, p.51) In the case of the virtual universities, the marketing is extensive and novel; for example the University of Phoenix presently has a commercial spot on CNN and Pierce University advertises on the exterior of the buses in the Philadelphia transit system. Both the for-profit and not-for-profit institutions advertise widely on the Internet with on-line applications conveniently attached. The overall mantra is "access to education for those with time and/or place constraints". In general the online institutions are proud of the fact that they are not limited to one geographical area; they advertise that they attract students from all parts of the country and the world. Thus it can easily be concluded that the adult community college student is among the targeted population.

It should also be noted that the institutions use their accreditation in the marketing. Generally the brick-and-mortar colleges and universities with virtual counterparts are already accredited by one of the eight regional accrediting commissions listed in Table 2. (These regional accrediting commissions are also in the process of establishing guidelines for the evaluation of electronically offered degree and certificate programs, http://www.neasc.org/cihe/guidelines_for_evaluation.htm). The University of Phoenix is accredited by one of the eight, the Higher Learning Commission and is a member of the North Central Association http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/.

The Students. Peterson's, producers of the Peterson's guides to colleges, also produces a guide to the online universities, Peterson's Guide to Distant Learning Programs (bookstore.Petersons.com). Peterson's characterizes the typical student who enrolls in distance education as being over 25 years old, employed, highly motivated, and having previous college experience (http://www.petersons.com/dlearn/who.html). Thus, as already pointed out, the market for distance education is typically that type of student that we see in the evening and weekend classes at the community college! Specifically in New Jersey for the Fall 1999 semester there were 122,882 students enrolled in the community colleges with part-time students for this period numbering 68,013 (more than 55%) (Parrish, R.D. (2000), Fact Book and Directory FY 2000-2001 (9th Ed.), Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Council of County Colleges). At County College of

Morris, part-time students make up 55% of the enrollment and those over the age of 24 make up 40%. (http://www.ccm.edu/college_info/ccm_info.htm).

Challenges for the Community Colleges. As indicated above, the major challenge that the virtual institutions present to the community colleges is the fact that the profile of the successful online student matches the profile of the evening part-time community college student. However the challenges do not stop there. Consider the certification granting influence of the online institutions. Suppose a community college and a corporate enterprise offer similar online courses on a certain software product, but the corporate enterprise also offers a highly desirable "certification" exam authorized by the software vendor. The adult student would certainly perceive that she could pass the certification exam more readily by taking the course offered by the corporate enterprise.

Another of the challenges rests in that fact that one of the major themes in the aggressive advertising of the virtual universities is that the student is not constrained by place. Consider then that some virtual universities may achieve positions of prominence. For example the first recommendation in "The Report of the Task Force on Distance Education at the Pennsylvania State University " states "That all necessary steps be taken to elevate Penn State to a position of recognized national leadership in the field of distance education" (http://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/pub/home/campnews/index.shtml).

The report further states that "80% of the inquires come from outside Pennsylvania, indicating the World Campus success in creating access for new students." If courses can be had from virtual institutions that keep their names favorably in the public eye, why would the adult distance-education student choose the community college course over the branded one?

Still another challenge is financial. One of the reasons for the past success of the community colleges has been the low cost per credit; however costs may become competitive with the virtual universities. Most of the virtual universities that are basically an indexed catalog of the courses at participating institutions specify that you pay the tuition fee of the institution at which you are taking the course. However West Virginia Governor Cecil Underwood has suggested that the 15 other Southern Regional Education Board governors adopt a tuition "electronic rate" for courses and programs offered at the Electronic Campus (Electronic Campus Press Release, March 12, 2001, http://www.electroniccampus.org/student/srecinfo/newsrelease). If tuition costs were the same, wouldn't a student choose the course at the most prestigious of the member institutions? From a financial viewpoint, one must also consider that many working adults have tuition reimbursement plans, so that the cost of taking a course may not be a deciding factor in choosing an online institution. Factoring out the cost of the education and the location of the campus, the choice may indeed rest on the name of the institution.

Besides cost and reputation, another aspect that puts the community college at risk is its slower ability to respond to change. Here is one example: the New Jersey Virtual Community College is an outgrowth of the New Jersey Virtual College; the community colleges were not the first to react to the growth of online education. Can the community colleges respond quickly enough to the demand for technical education that the adult learner needs in order to upgrade skills? Does the community college have the human and financial resources to incorporate such changes quickly?

Keeping the Brick-and-Mortar with Value-Added Components. The challenges to the community colleges will only increase as the extensiveness of online education becomes more pervasive. Among the alternatives that the community college faces are these:

- hope that the adult student does not become aware of the distance learning choices she has (not very likely!).
- become a smaller institute focusing primarily on the traditional college student that attends the two-year campus.
- focus on vocational training that benefits directly from hands-on experience. Examples that come to mind are the culinary programs in Hotel/Restaurant management and service programs in Heating and Air-conditioning Training or Automobile Repair.

- offer some advantages in online education that will make the community college more attractive than other distant learning institutions.

The last of the above is of course the most desirable if the present flavor of the community college is to be retained. The key is to add value to the community college offerings. Cumberland County Community College, Vineland, New Jersey is currently adding value to several of its associate degree programs by establishing an articulation agreement with Franklin University of Columbus, Ohio. Students at Cumberland with two-year degrees will be able to take "bridge" courses at Cumberland and then complete their bachelor's degree by taking online courses offered at Franklin (http://www.cccnj.net/ccc/pages/homelinks/cccnews.html - 4yrdegree). Because "distance" is an important component in "distance-learning" and the community college is by nature a "local" institute, another innovative approach to attract the adult student is well-conceived hybrid courses. A hybrid course has both an on-campus and an online component. The on-campus component focuses on aspects of the course that are best implemented by student and professor face-to-face. The online component focuses on aspects that lend themselves to web interactivity and/or private inquiry.

Hybrid Course Example. As stated above, the hybrid course has both an on-campus and an online component. Ideally the students would be brought to campus for instruction that is best delivered in a live, personal environment with a teacher and relieved of coming to campus for instruction that could readily be obtained through the web and self-study. For example in a Java computer course the student might learn to use the complexities of the integrated development environment (IDE) software more readily with instructor-led hands-on instruction. On the other hand an online component that emphasizes the syntax of the language and illustrates examples from the class libraries still gives the student much flexibility in time and place.

Two sections of a hybrid course in Java had been offered for the first time at County College of Morris in the Spring 2001 semester. Each section met on campus eight times. The campus meetings alternated with on-line study.

For each of the sixteen weeks, the course website offered a summary of topics to be covered, extensive lecture notes, reading and homework assignments, links to resources both on the Internet and within the course website itself, and a laboratory assignment.

The lecture notes were textual documents that presented the kind of information that a professor would give in class. Additionally they contained small hands-on computer exercises to help the student understand the concepts being illustrated.

The required textbook came with some of the software that the student would need to develop Java programs. The text also contained examples of code that the student could study as additional examples. Additional software could be downloaded from Sun Microsystems Inc.

The laboratory assignments were due on a weekly basis and were to be submitted by email whether they were due during an on-campus week or an on-line week. The assignment topics built on one another, so that it was important that the student submit them on time.

Students were also required to develop a final presentation on some aspect of Java not studied in class. The presentation mandated a written explanation of the topic that the student would illustrate by a working Java program and an oral presentation.

The first class session was on-campus. During this session, students briefly introduced themselves and were shown how to use the system selected by the College for on-line delivery (WebCT). They were also given an example of one type of Java program called an application and were shown how to download the appropriate software for the development of applications (Java™ 2 SDK), and how to use it. They were then guided through adding enhancements to the basic application and an overview of concepts that they would be studying the next week.

During the following week the students were expected to work on-line. They had a laboratory assignment that required them to build another application that reinforced the material in the previous on-campus presentation. They were able to access on-line tutorials that summarized the steps presented in the on-campus lecture. In addition the students were expected to study additional concepts in the development of applications presented in the on-line lecture notes and in the assigned text material. This new material would be reinforced in a laboratory assignment due the following week.

The students again met on campus during the third week. During the lecture, they learned about another type of Java program called an applet. They were shown how to use the development software tools for creating and executing applet code. A laboratory assignment that reinforced these new concepts would be due the following week.

The students worked on-line during the fourth week, following a model similar to the second week, but this time working on applets.

The pattern of coming to campus one week and working on-line the next continued. During the on-campus meetings, the students were presented some new aspect of using the software. For example it might be the use of an integrated development environment or it might be instructions on how to import images and sound (Both these processes are generally involved and error-prone and hence benefit from face-to-face instruction). They would also be presented with an overview and examples of the concepts to follow. They also had the opportunity to get help in debugging their computer assignments. During the next week they worked on-line, honing the skills presented in the last week and investigating more deeply the ideas presented in the overview.

Each week the students were expected to submit a laboratory assignment. The timeliness of submissions helped keep the students on track and active in the course, even during the non-campus meetings. (Some leniency was given for late submissions, however, in deference to the work schedules of the student). The assignments were submitted via email; students posted both the Java code for the assignment and screen captures of the output. The instructor graded both and responded to the student in a timely manner. The laboratory assignments accounted for sixty percent of the course grade.

The students were also graded on their final presentation (It represented thirty percent of the grade). The student orally presented the work at the last campus meeting, using the computer to show the completed project. Each of the students in the class was also given a written description of the project, including source code. Judging from student response, the presentations were a highlight of the course. They gave the creator a chance to investigate some aspect of Java that particularly interested her; they gave the audience the chance to see more of the capabilities of Java and also the opportunity to learn from the development styles of others. They also provided the student with an opportunity to develop presentation skills. They also gave the instructor an opportunity to evaluate the student's ability to work independently.

Besides the presentations, another of the more interesting aspects of the course was the sense of community that developed among the students. Students were encouraged to take an active part in the course with ten percent of the course grade depending on participation. The bulletin board was quite active with submissions. Students who were having difficulty with their assignments posted questions often with examples of Java code and error messages. Other students downloaded the code and made suggestions for debugging. Often the discussions were threaded among several participants and contained many responses to other responses, usually ending with a thank-you from the original poster. Personalities emerged within the bulletin board postings so that it was easy to identify students in class from their on-line personalities!

The students taking the course typically met the profile of the adult learner who wanted to update skills. Moreover, since the course has a prerequisite that the student already studied object-oriented programming in the C++ language, the students had a high proficiency in the use of computers and had already demonstrated success in learning.

An informal review of the student outcomes in the course yielded some results that were quite amazing. Of the forty students enrolled, two dropped out early in the semester. Five others did not complete the course, but had A grades for all their submissions before they ceased participation (Three of these students indicated that their work schedules were too intense for them to continue the course). The remaining thirty-three students finished the course with either an A or a B—no small task for an advanced computer course!

In an informal survey administered after course grades were submitted, most of the students responding indicated that they did enjoy the hybrid course. They appreciated both the instructor-led sessions and the flexibility of not having to be on campus every week. Most indicated that they would take another hybrid course and that they would recommend the Java hybrid course to other students.

Although the above statistics are scant and certainly need more scrutiny, they do give hope for the development of hybrid courses as a measure in retaining the adult learner. The online component offers some flexibility with time and space and yet the campus meetings provide live participation and access to the instructor and classmates.

Conclusion. Improvements in the technology to deliver online courses and the availability of the Internet are changing the face of higher education. The adult learner no longer is limited by time and place for instruction. As the pervasiveness of institutions expanding their online offerings continues, the environment for attracting the adult learner will become increasingly competitive. Since the community colleges traditionally served a large segment of the adult community of learners, the community college is especially vulnerable to the increased competition.

It is necessary for the community college to recognize the need for change and become innovative in its approaches to retaining the adult learner. The easiest way to become innovative is to focus on the local community and provide value-added components to online offerings. Such components can be as pioneering as offering courses that bridge the gap between associate and bachelor degrees or as accommodating as offering hybrid courses that meld both campus and online components.

An initial offering of a hybrid course at County College of Morris has produced promising results in terms of student retention and level of achievement. Future endeavors with this methodology may prove to be the ideal vehicle for the community college to provide quality education while maximizing the concept of education at "any time and any place."

Table 1. Websites of Some of the Virtual Universities

http://www.cvc.edu	California Virtual Campus
http://www.floridavirtualcampus.org:/	Florida Virtual Campus
www.electroniccampus.org	Electronic Campus of the Southern Regional Education Board
http://www.icn.org/	Indiana College Network
http://www.kcvu.org/	Kentucky Virtual University
http://www.mivu.org/	Michigan Virtual University
http://njvu.org/	New Jersey Virtual University
http://www.oln.org/	Ohio Learning Network
http://www.online.uillinois.edu/	University of Illinois Online
http://sln.suny.edu/	SUNY Learning Network
http://www.wgu.edu/	Western Governors University
http://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/	Penn State World Campus
http://www.vct.org/	Virtual College of Texas

Table 2: Regional Accrediting Commissions

Commission on Higher Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, New England Association of Colleges and Schools

Commission on Technical and Career Institutions, New England Association of Colleges and Schools

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

The Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges

Commission on Colleges, Southern Association of Schools and Colleges

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, Western Association of Schools and Colleges

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distance.gradschools.com (Lists distance learning schools and Peterson's reviews)

www.accrediteddldegrees.com (Accredited college degrees through distance learning)

www.ped.gu.se/users/ulric/vus.html (List of virtual universities)

www.kcvu.org (Self-Assessment for taking online courses)

www.petersons.com/dlearn/study.html (study tips for successful distance learning)

www.petersons.com/dlearn/distancelearnquiz3.html (Exercise to determine readiness for independent study)

www.wired.com/news/culture/0,1284,14876,00.html (Stanford's foray into distance learning)

www.wired.com//news/culture/0,1284,15061,00.html (Challenges of putting a course online)

www.wired.com//news/culture/0,1284,15060,00.html (Details on California Virtual University and why it is not part of WGU)

www.open.edu (Details on the United States Open University)

www.wgu.edu/wgu/about/release54.html (Press release reporting the progress of Western Governors University)

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UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGES

WIN WNI KYI

BERGEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

MIDCAREER FELLOWSHIP

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

FALL 2000-SPRING 2001

Understanding the Challenges of Cross-cultural Communication in the Community Colleges

The Twenty - first century is an exciting and a challenging time as America is in a period of social transformation from a structurally pluralistic society to that of a culturally pluralistic one. Bergen Community College is a reflection and reality of this national transformation. Indeed, Bergen Community College is an ideal case study for the existence and understanding of the challenges of cross-cultural communication. Not unlike many other community colleges, the local community boundaries have been expanded to embrace the global classroom.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the pressing challenges of cross-cultural communication, as many classrooms no longer tend to be homogenous but heterogeneous in population, priorities, placement and privilege. It further explores the cultural assumptions that hinder learning, teaching, open-mindedness, empathy and civility.
In this progressively global world, one need not step out of one's community, campus or classroom to encounter and experience the ever-increasing moments of " culture shock." These potential stressful moments of "culture shock" can be transformed into memories of cultural enlightenment, with deeper understanding of cross-cultural communication.

Bergen Community College often refers to itself as the "second Opportunity College" is in the heart of a wealthy Bergen county. It was founded in 1965 with classrooms in makeshift trailers as permanent classrooms were still a concept and far away from construction. Little did the founding father, faculty and administration realize that within three decades, it would emerge as the largest two-year college in the Garden State representing a mosaic student body from Albania to Zimbabwe.

It is no secret and a proud declaration that Bergen Community College has about 12,000 both full and part-time students from over one hundred countries, with thirty languages spoken among the students, faculty, administration and staff. One might say that Bergen Community College is a microcosm of New Jersey with its slogan " One family, many faces". It pulls at one's heartstring to see dynamic diversity, but how does cross-cultural communication play in conversation and classroom as students and faculty are in close proximity with each other for extended semesters.

What is cross-cultural communication? Historically, the terms cross-cultural communication and intercultural communication have been used interchangeably in daily discourse by authors and linguists. However, there are many scholars in the field who have distinguished these two in terms of how cultures are studied, observed and analyzed. Cross-cultural communication involves comparing and contrasting cultures while intercultural communication includes the actual interaction between cultures. For instance, comparing Chinese and American values and modes of communication is cross-cultural communication. Generally, Americans believe in freedom of speech while the Chinese excel in freedom of silence. It examines all of the "ics" such as kinetics, proxemics, chronemics and so forth. On the other hand, analyzing and interpreting what occurs when Chinese government dialogues and negotiates with the American government over the recent spy plane incident is intercultural communication in essence, emphasis and endeavor.

The potential for cross-cultural challenges varies within the frequency and intimacy of the people involved. For example, in a case of lovers, the relationship is frequent and intimate. It involves multiple interactions and extended exposure to each other. Therefore, it is possible to transcend cultural differences and construct a genuine and an empathetic relationship cemented by similarities and differences. The other extreme to this is in a case of a public meeting when the relationship is not frequent and definitely not intimate. Then it is generally possible to ignore cultural differences and discomforts to pursue the meeting agenda and goals at hand.

Additionally, one could say that a classroom interaction falls between the lovers' scenario and a public meeting. It is professional in nature but extended in exposure. Consequently, it is vastly advantageous for the faculty and students to take good notes on the dynamics of cross-cultural communication. Why should both parties be concerned with this? The simple truth is that the effectiveness and awareness of cross-cultural communication can only increase learning and understanding while ineffective communication can lead to misunderstanding, migraine, and misery.

America is often referred to not only as the "Mother of Democracy" but is now also emerging as the "Mother of Diversity." However, those who have recently been immigrating to this country come from much greater diversity of nations, backgrounds, religions, social status, education and professions than ever before. Bergen Community College's student population parallels this new wave of migration as students enter from Central and Latin America, Island nations, Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East. In this wide array of variety also lies the potential for cross-cultural mine fields and conflicts both in class and on campus.

In classrooms, the faculty must be mindful of this undercurrent, as some of the students have been freshly scared, frightened or hardened. On campus, administration, student services and personnel must be observant of cultural, religious and ethnic innuendoes. However, both the classroom and campus can also be a healing ground from which the mosaic faces and traces of everyone is transformed into a creative and shared artistic human tapestry.

A case in hand happened in the middle of the Bosnian conflict where the Serbians and Croatians were at war. There were many casualties of the Serbian ethnic cleansing. This war from 1992-1995 on another continent seemed like a faraway reality but not when one counsels and teaches at Bergen Community College.As an International Student Counselor, my responsibility has been to provide appropriate advise, counsel and assistance to students from all corners of the world. In this particular case, I was counseling a Croatian and a Serbian student. I was often amazed at how similar they were in their passion for education, thirst for knowledge, work ethics and youthful demeanor.

In fact, they could have been cousins as their facial features were so prominately alike. My initial counseling with both of them started with immigration laws and regulations. However, their subsequent visits to me turned into more personal and cultural counseling as they had much to share and reveal about their life's experiences at such tender ages. As both unloaded their struggles and anguish to me, I even recommended personal counseling as part of "talk therapy". This time I was not successful as they continued to seek my counsel, compassion and company. As weeks

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progressed, I could not help but to reveal to both of them about the parallel stories that I was receiving from them. Then, I took a bold step and asked if they would be interested in meeting and in this case " facing the enemy". My question had similar responses as, at first, both of them were surprised that the "enemy" was on the same campus. Secondly, both were angry that our campus had allowed the other party to enroll in higher education. I gave a timely lecture on equal access as a foundation of democracy.

I spent more hours separately with them talking about the need to forgive the "enemy" despite the past atrocities. I shared my belief that an inability to forgive those who have transgressed against us would lead to desperation, depression and despair. Furthermore, I shared my own personal experiences where I was unable to accept and forgive the military government for its past deeds against my people. I was intensely against the military that for the longest time I would not voluntarily talk to anyone in a green uniform, wear any green or ride in a green colored car. On the other hand, after three decades of analysis, I realized that I must face and forgive the military for the past mistakes. I must give it another chance and support, as there are some enlightened generals who are now in the right path for reconciliation, peace and development. Additionally, they have the immediate power to uplift the living, health and educational standards of my people.

When I shared this story, I did not know where it would lead to with the two "conflicting" students. However, a few days after my "revelation", they came to see me to say that they wanted to meet the other one. Consequently, I set up a meeting in my office. Both of them came punctually but visibly anxious and uncomfortable. Yet within a few moments, they broke down and shed tears of anguish, sorrow and forgiveness. They realized that they were not on a battleground but on intellectual soil. As they got to know each other better, they came to see me together to say that they wanted to participate in our annual World Week Opening Ceremony. However, they made a special request asking me that they wanted an exchange and not carry their own flag but another's. I was thrilled as they were because unknown to others on campus and the audience, a small step was taken right on our campus ground for ethnic unification and celebration. That day was a significant marker in both my personal and professional life as the students taught me that forgiveness is not that difficult. In reality, forgiveness is necessary as it invariably allows the conflicting individuals to be released of negative emotions , unresolved issues and volcanic anger.

When I had my counseling debriefing, I was asked what counseling and communication techniques I had employed in my sessions with the two students clearly suffering from "old country hostility". I stated that I put human faces and experiences as sharing more similarities than differences regardless of external appearances and armed conflicts. Then I quoted Lao-Tzu who said " I have three things to teach: simplicity, patience and compassion. These are your greatest treasures". Upon reflection, I suppose I did just that by sharing my simple forgiveness story, limitless counseling time and my heart-centered attention.

I have often told my colleagues, family, friends and even skeptics of counseling that there is never a dull moment as each student brings in front of me, the wonders, realities and challenges of the world and my competency. Every student is a golden coach which I must catch to deliver the services that I am trained and skillful in doing. Truthfully, just when I think there are no more surprises, I am faced with more.

One fine day, a middle-aged Korean couple was in my office for "consultation" not counseling. In certain cultures, the term counseling is synonymous with " going crazy" so sometimes it is culturally advisable to avoid this term in sessions. The issue at hand was the fact that the couple has been living and working in New Jersey for the past twenty years. They have an established laundromat and were ready to attend college to learn English the " right way, the American way with no Korean accent". They were both excited about finally having the time and opportunity to learn English.

The couple was determined that they would be accepted and assimilated into mainstream America if they spoke flawless American English. They believed just as Theodore Roosevelt in 1919 who stated that " If the immigrant who comes here in good faith becomes an American and assimilates himself to us, he shall be treated in an exact equality with everyone else". They are Americans as validated in their passport, yet they have felt discriminated and excluded. Learning English becomes more than language acquisition but an affirmation of their identity and worth. Therefore, English language placement goes deeper and into the heart of cultural conflicts and personal dilemma. The husband was rather agitated with the results of the Comprehensive English Language Test, which placed his wife in a higher proficiency level. This was not acceptable as he was the head of the household and his wife could not be in a higher level. All logic fell short as he was not " going to be disgraced in the eyes of his children."He was most rigid and demanded that unless his wife stayed in the same level with him;, he would not allow her to attend classes at all.

At that moment, the teary and petrified wife consented to stay at the same level and further promised that she would get a lower grade, on purpose, so that he would not "lose face" for low placement and class performance. The angry man turned into an amicable spouse after hearing his wife's consent and obedience. However, I felt as though I had failed in assisting the wife achieve what she deserved according to my Western counseling and confrontation approach. On the other hand, I had to observe and honor the cultural dignity of the counselees. Often I would have to remind myself to be flexible as a bamboo and not to be so rigid as an oak.

A few weeks into the semester, the once petrified wife glided into my office with a newfound look of confidence. She was elated as she received an "A" in her Speech class. It was a trophy of achievement as she has always lived in the culture of silence as a dutiful wife and mother. She giggled like a young child and told me that " I did not know that I had a talking tongue and I had many opinions. Where did they come from?"

I could only guess that in her world of silence, she had listened more than talk. She probably listened twice as much as she talked, thus becoming a treasure trove of information and knowledge. Sometimes in this "talking and doing society" of ours, we often talk ourselves to confusion, conflicts, and confrontation. Additionally, she told me that she was very impressed with the way that I had "handled her husband like a man would". I took that comment as a true compliment coming from another Asian woman. Furthermore, her husband came to see me after two semesters with much improved English. He was definitely more comfortable with the consultation and conversation. With a broad grin, he was proud to report that he had been able to articulate many sounds correctly but his challenges remained the "l" and "j" sounds as instead of ordering "fried rice", he would say "fly lice" or saying "gaw" instead of "jaw". So how did he overcome these challenges? He showed me a note card stating in bold letters " Fried Rice" while he told me that when he had to say "jaw", he would simply point to it.

The crucial link between language and culture is a cornerstone of cross-cultural communication success. In order for me to "handle" the agitated and frustrated husband appropriately, I had to show respect, speak softly, empathize with his personal experience and cultural reality. My place was not to judge his belief but to work with him so that his feeling of having "lost face" could be retrieved , and both of them would enroll in English classes which could transform into a forum for understanding another way of thinking and point of view. In this particular case, both the husband and wife profited from the language classes which transformed them into happier and more adjusted individuals and citizens.

Just as there is success in the world of cross-cultural counseling, there also exists moments of failures especially when dealing with female students who not only face cultural challenges but gender issues. For many female students especially from Asia, Africa and the Middle East, it is a new experience to be in the same classroom with the men or to have male instructors. Consequently, they are excessively self-conscious, uncomfortable, intimidated, shy and quiet.

A case in hand was a student from Saudi Arabia who had recently married .She was a medical doctor whose parents arranged her marriage to a New Jerseyan entrepreneur from the same country. He did not want her to continue her medical profession here as it would be time consuming. Therefore, he wanted her to continue her studies only in Education, as there were invariably fewer male students in this major than in others. This was not her choice, but she was his spouse so she must obey and be silent. As she stated, science was her strength but liberal arts classes were her weaknesses. Therefore, she struggled every wakeful moment in her studies while fulfilling her duties as a gracious and grateful wife. However, when she did not pass her first quiz, he used his fist "to put her in her place." When I became aware of this abuse, I informed her about her rights and protection in this country. I even told her that I wanted to meet her husband and discuss this matter. She would not hear of this, furthermore, she was visibly frightened, cornered and isolated. She could not turn to her family, as she would be blamed because she should be thankful to her husband for marrying and bringing her to this country. Later in the semester, I learned that she unofficially left the college. A case like this is a constant reminder to me that my tasks as an international student counselor are full of triumphs and defeats. This case also humbled me professionally as I had always thought that I would be able to reach out and make a difference in all my students' lives, endeavors and dreams.

Not unlike my female student from Saudi Arabia, I often meet other international and immigrant female students who are sometimes frightened, powerless and insecure despite academic success and achievement. I would persistently share stories and accomplishments of women worldwide from historical to modern times. I would even quote an ancient Chinese adage, which stated that " Women hold half the Sky". Personally to me, after two thousand years, only "baby steps " have been taken in claiming " half the sky" with only 11.2% of women is in executive corporate positions, despite the fact that 78% of women is in the work force. This is a current reality inspite of the cry for "50=50 by 2004 in Government: Get the Balance Right" movement. Furthermore, it is rather discouraging, as there are eight female state senators amidst ninety-two male counterparts. The worldwide representation is no better as out of one hundred and eighty-nine United Nations member countries, there are presently only eleven female ambassadors. Yet, to many of my international and immigrant female students, they are elated that there are women in positions of power, public policy and politics. Who am I to argue with such enthusiasm?

In addition to counseling, I have been teaching courses in English as A Second Language (ESL), Sociology, Psychology and Comparative Religion. However, in the past decade, my teaching concentration has been in the field of ESL, as I believe in the power of language acquisition. Language, in essence, changes one's life as seen by transformation in newly arrived immigrants after they gain language and cultural proficiency. I have come to appreciate what an enormous effort it is to be educated in a language and culture of other people. Additionally, it is most beneficial for the faculty to be culturally aware and awaken with emerging classroom diversity.

What are some distinctive cultural information and communication techniques to help both the instructor and students? First, many international and immigrant students come from cultures where relationship takes precedence over the learning at hand. The relationship development and maintenance may be the primary factor regarding how well the students will excel and participate in class. No external temptations such as bonus points for class participation and teamwork would do without the relationship and respect factors. Second, there exists a reality of hierarchical status between the faculty and students. Students from hierarchical society such as Japan, Thailand and Ghana would not engage in critical discussion and open dialogue. Third, certain educational elements and philosophies may not make sense to many of them. Many European students may not understand the attendance requirements in most colleges .For this group, the final mastery of the subject matter is all that counts.

Fourth, the faculty member is seen as the unchallenged "guru" of knowledge, truth and wisdom. The students are passive and non-confrontational as they absorb and excel in a teacher-centered learning environment. In Asian countries, the teaching faculty is revered as the center of enlightenment and empowerment. In fact, in a daily Buddhist prayer, a devout follower would thank five elements of reverence , namely, the Lord Buddha, his teachings, monks and nuns, teachers and parents. The teachers are remembered before the parents. In such countries, the teachers possess total authority and exalted status to mold the minds and tame the hearts of the students. Finally, the notion of equality is not equally understood universally. A case in hand is the belief that inequality exists so that those who are more blessed are responsible to take care of those who are less fortunate. Thus, there is a mutually expected and respected co-existence among the individuals.

As I work with those whom I personally and professionally feel need appropriate academic engagement, I am also mindful of how some international and immigrant students may become powerless and perplexed. In some cases, cultural intimidation may be the result of lack of cultural information and exposure. For example, a student is invited to express his or her ideas in class .This opportunity could become an intimidation to the student who is not culturally equipped to speak out in public.

Any community college that embraces diversity in its mission statement must set in place programs to educate and enlighten everyone as the classrooms represent a colorful and talented mosaic. This type of commitment is not merely a matter of buzzwords, popular hype or "photo op". It translates into continuous and sincere strive together, with a financial and resource commitment from the administration, to promote programs. It is not merely a matter of cultures in emphasis and experience but profoundly academic in focus and direction. These programs are joint ventures among student clubs, student government and activities, faculty development, student services, admissions and registration and individual departments.

The programs could be thematic such as World Week: Exploring Understanding, Open-mindedness and Tolerance, African Heritage Week, Latin American Week, Asian Heritage Month, Polish Week, Black American Heritage Month, Women's History Month, etc. These programs must be accessible to evening students too as well to the adjunct faculty. This population of teaching faculty is crucial, as there are 393 adjunct faculty versus 245 full time teaching faculty presently at Bergen Community College.

In conclusion, it is a privilege to work with the 'representatives of the world" in one's classroom and campus. These multi-faceted and multi-talented individuals from all corners of the world are students today but leaders of tomorrow. America is the fertilizing ground to educate, encourage and enlighten these students so that we not only create "kinder America" but a "Compassionate World" of true harmony and co-existence. One might say that a community college on the highway namely Bergen Community College is a long stretch, but I think not.

It is important to bear in mind that 52% of students in higher education are presently seeking their "American Dream" and world peace in community colleges across the nation. It was in 1996 that our valedictorian went on to continue her studies at Harvard University .The achievement of this young intellect from Belarus is a reminder neither to undermine nor underestimate the quality and challenging education of a community college. Additionally, Bergen Community College celebrates the dawn of this new century when the valedictorian from Dumont, New Jersey from the Class of 2001 was accepted into another " jewel of higher education" namely Yale University. Long live community colleges from shore to shore and sea to sea.

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Struggling with Gender:
A Male in Literary Feminism

I want to suggest a different metaphor for theoretical work: the metaphor of struggle, of wrestling with angels. The only theory worth having is that which you have to fight off, not that which you speak with profound fluency.
Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and Theoretical Legacies"

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I. Station

> You are not the same people who left that station
> Or who will arrive at any terminus.
> "Little Gidding" T.S. Eliot

In the gloom before daylight savings time, I was standing on the train station. I will see the yellow light of the engine before it arrives. It is the only light I can see, for my paper was going badly. What I was supposed to do for my Mid-Career Fellowship project was to articulate a feminist position and then watch how it unfolded in practice in the 2000-2001 academic year in my literature classes.[1] Slowly, piece-by-piece, assumption-by-assumption, though, I watched the project turn into a cloud-clapped tower, which over the last semester and a half had dissolved into thick cold soupy air of mid-March New Jersey. I didn't see it coming, but my grand scheme of locating the gender differences between men and women students was undone by trifles and the blond with the earring.

But last fall I was hopeful with my one course a Contemporary Literature course with twenty-seven students ready to track down the link between reading and gender. Elizabeth Flynn developed the standard interpretation. Flynn proposed that men tend to be dominant readers and that women are more nurturing readers. Women readers, she claims, are better readers because they are more open to the relationships within a text and aware, thus, of the subtle complexities of literature. This is because women, according to Flynn, possess "a willingness to listen, a sensitivity to emotional nuance, an ability to empathize with and yet judge." [2]

With only twenty-seven students, I knew I wouldn't be generating any significant numbers for anything approaching "proof." The required readings were picked to elicit if not a mini-gender war, at least some noticeable differences: Angela Carter's The Bloody Chamber reworked fairy tales from a women's point of view; Elizabeth Strout's Amy and Isabelle and Joyce Carol Oates' Man Crazy were portraits in American realism of the complicated relationships between mothers, daughters and men; Nick Hornby's ironically titled High Fidelity was about the presence of fidelity in pop music but its absence in relationships; and the screenplay for American Beauty interrogated the way in which the male gaze operates in movies. I thought each would yield some splits in reading along gender lines.

Although not a contemporary text, we also read Ibsen's A Doll's House, which provided a link to the project's original inspiration. About five years ago, in two different classes only a semester apart, I had nearly the same responses to the end of taped performance of A Doll's House. After I turned off the tape and in the intervening reentry of students in the lighted world of active discussion, I asked "Do you feel sorry for Torvald?" one male student shouted out "if she were my wife, I'd punch her out." A variation of that disturbing event happened the next semester and at that moment I saw one of my assumptions about students called into question. Because while I assumed that Union County College students are at various levels of caring about the material or of even being in college, it was my experience that they had gone beyond previous generations and saw equality between the sexes. Hadn't the woman's movement in America been rolling on now for over 30 years and in Europe feminism was at least as old as rock n' roll? To me my students were joined more in their youth rather than separated by their gender. I had sensed a change in my students about these things yet these two men signaled something very different. Moreover, as any professor knows, if comments reach the public surface of the classroom, there was probably a lot more going on in the depths of other students.

I wasn't, however, so much interested in investigating the serious issue of male violence to women, but to see if men and women really read texts differently, brought two different languages to bear in reading and writing. That is what I was trying to do last fall I had set out to see if gender had any impact on they way students read texts. The problem was that as the semester progressed, the more reading I did in feminism and gender studies, the more assignments I designed, the more student journals I read, the more convoluted and unclear the project became. Nothing fell the "right" way; that is, any way that I could account for or measure. It wasn't clear that men and women read all that differently.

For example, in the fall semester after the tape of A Doll's House was finished not a peep from any man except one who vocally took Nora's side and privately wrote in his journal: "When Nora started saying 'What do you consider my most sacred duties?' and her response to 'before all else you are a wife and a mother!' as 'I don't believe that any longer. I believe that before all else I am a reasonable human being just as you are...' I was like Hell Yeah, GO NORA!! This was some good stuff." There were, however, women students who sided with Nora up to the point she leaves her children. Some of these students felt that, as one woman wrote: "it is a woman's natural duty to take care of children." The women were harder on the women than the men.

We read the usually combative High Fidelity and, yes, some of the women said Rob was a "typical male loser", but other women said that Rob with his failure to commit to a meaningful relationship could have been either male or female. But one male student's journal entry pointed out something I hadn't noticed: "it's good that we've finally gotten around where the guys in the class don't feel completely overwhelmed by the girls in the class because now we're reading a book that shows that we don't have all the answers even though we might act like we do." This was another blow to gender stereotypes. The usual scenario was that patriarchy ruled the classroom and women students meekly submitted to male authority. While I hadn't noticed the shift in this particular class, my experiences of the classrooms over several semesters was that patriarchy no longer held its fabled sway over the educational process.

In one woman's response to Oates' Man Crazy that women often fall in love with the worse men, one man in the back said: "men find the worse women, too." And when I asked the students to write a letter by any character of the opposite sex would write the day after Lester Burnham was shot in American Beauty, I got only one response that I would have considered "male." Writing as Angela Hayes one male said, "I hope I get his red Camero." However, in fact, even to locate the car reference as male is no longer a solid marker of difference. Yet, this is how another male student wrote in Jane Burnham's voice:

> I feel bad that I am not more upset. I know I talked about killing him, but I told Ricky that I was not being serious. I loved my father. And the more I think about it, the more I wish I could have been closer to him. Girls are supposed to be close to their fathers. I used to be close to him. I loved spending time with him, but I guess it gets more difficult as you get older. The situation with Angela was so difficult to deal with, but it was not nearly as difficult as this. I am sorry that I did not give him more of a chance.

This doesn't sound like a male student closed off from emotions and feelings. As you can see, the entries of my male students weren't following the theory. So how was I going to discuss in fifteen pages how men and women read differently and how men should read more like what I was told a women read like, when the students failed to live up to the predicted differences?

Where did I get that expectation? In the question of whether men and women read differently the reading I had done in the early 90's and mid-90's, I fully expected a reenactment of what is a truism for some feminists: that male students would not identify with women

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characters while the female students might choose a male character. Based on the work of Nancy Chodorow and Carol Gilligan there was the strong belief among feminist that, as Gilligan observed, "male and female voices typically speak of the importance of different truths, the former of the role of separation as it defines and empowers the self, the latter of the ongoing process of attachment that sustains the human community". [3]

This provided the theoretical basis for Elizabeth Flynn's gender-based reading schema and has filtered down to the public through Deborah Tannen especially in her You Just Don't Understand. In language, Tannen says, men act as if life is a contest; they engage the world "as an individual in a hierarchical social order in which he was either one up or one down." For women, though, they engage the world as "an individual in a network of connections…Life, then, is a community, a struggle to preserve intimacy and avoid isolation." (24-25) This has boiled down to the belief among people who otherwise shun stereotypes that men seek power while women seek relationships. Or, in its dumbest version, men are from Mars women are from Venus. (This I gather makes dating and mating an interplanetary struggle.)

As one who often repeated Tannen's duality, I fully expected that the men would be in the words of Elizabeth Flynn "resistant readers" unable or unwilling to relate to a women characters. This clearly did not happen in the fall semester. The women are not from Venus they are, like the men, from the suburban enclaves of Cranford, Clark, Westfield and from the cities of Elizabeth and Plainfield.

Nevertheless, I wasn't giving up on charting the differences. So in the waning days of the fall 2000 semester, I sent a memo to my department asking for suggestions of what different texts would elicit "the two different languages men and women bring to bear in their reading." One small foreshadowing of the final project's final outcome came from a female colleague who

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marched into my office and said very firmly: “Men and women don’t speak different languages. That’s the point!” I believe I wore one of those grins that read: “Thanks for your ‘input’ now please take your personal problems somewhere else.” So I spent Christmas break reading the major texts suggested: Shakespeare's’ The Taming of the Shrew, Susan Glaspell’s Trifles, Amy Tan’s Joy Luck Club. All the while telling myself that my colleague was wrong and that I had a whole month to prepare for the next semester’s Introduction to Literature course.

II. Movement: Trifles and the blond with the earring

> Experience can never be a reliable guide to the real.
> Diana Fuss, Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference

Now in bleak mid-March, however, Christmas a distant blur with a mere eight weeks left, my project lay in pieces, fragmented with too much reading, not enough writing, dead-end assignments, disappearing students, five changes in the reading schedule, and contradictory experiences that forbid cogent analysis, much less fifteen publication-ready pages.

The train station was cold, bleak, and still no light.

Weariness had set in and a few weeks ago, before I realized that my project was about to fold, as my English 102, Introduction to Literature class exhausted its 75 minutes, I took a shot in the dark. I wrote on the board: "Of all the characters you’ve read this semester which character seems the most like you? You can choose any character. 20 minutes.” I was careful not to mention gender.

I was hoping that at least when it came to identifying with a woman character that the men especially wouldn’t cross-read, tantamount to cross-dressing, the gender line. I shouldn’t have been but was surprised, however, later to read that not only did two of the males identify with a woman character but that not one woman student identified with a man. One was student, who had tried out for the XFL, who saw himself, if rather vaguely, in the characters of the wise but ignored Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale from Trifles. The other was an art major who identified with Kate from Taming of the Shrew: "my greatest similarity to Kate is that search for a challenge and how far I can take it before I give into it, like she gives into Petruchio."

So this fog-bound dreary day in the class a few hours before the train pushed its way through the Central Jersey fog, after finishing Amy Tan's Joy Luck Club, I tried the question again. This time the question was in two parts: the character you most identified with and the character you least identified with. This time I got five men who identified with a women character, four for June Woo of Joy Luck Club and one for Taming of the Shrew's Kate. Again not one woman identified with a male character and only one woman said she least identified with a male character, A Doll's House's Torvald Helmer.

Sitting in the train reading these "aberrant responses", I wished that NJ Transit had bar cars. These readings weren't aberrant but to a trend, a trend that eventually I needed to explain. Some explanations emerged quickly. One is that since the course had an announced feminist frame, some of the male students wanted to get on the "right" side of the power relationship; i.e. siding with the male professor. This would make me some kind of academic Alpha male, but still wouldn't explain the sensitivity of their journal writing. Or that with these specific texts there were so few good men, that with different texts with male protagonists, the men would have had a wider choice. But as I have said, I have been seeing this change for a few years now. Or as one colleague suggested, that since the men are reputed to be interested in power, they would choose the most powerful character man or woman. That position assumes that power is the main issue and I think now power is less interesting for them then it was for my generation.

Or finally, is it possible that in spite of our biology, years of social conditioning, the need to have a solid identity, that gender didn't make a difference in reading?

It is this last question that I will answer in the conclusion of the paper. But for now as the train rolled westerly I remembered the blond with the earring. Since we returned from spring break, I couldn't figure out what had changed in the room. I felt it was important, but I couldn't figure out what it was. Then as the class talked, I noticed the blond in the back wearing jeans, a T-shirt, running shoes, and sporting recently dyed, very blond hair, now cut short revealing an earring I had never seen before. I swept through this trifle and I passed on through the discussion we were having of Trifles. Then at the end of class the blond walked up to me and asked in a shaky voice: "Can I hand in my paper late? I haven't been feeling well lately." I said sure and watched the blond walk out. It wasn't an epiphany then but the point began to build.

I have failed to mention but (if you are good at trifles) you might have guessed that the blond is a male: the biggest guy in the class had died his blond and had added an earring. Given the subtle evolutions in our classrooms, often the striking can evolve into the everyday without much notice. Besides, it may be a trifle to many of you. But the point is, as it has been for a while, that the whole foundation we have been teaching (and living) under is being transformed in many ways, the most relevant here is gender. Having graduated in 1961 from high school, I know that any boy who had suddenly decided to dye his hair and wear an earring would have suffered more than the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. It was bad enough ten years later to have shoulder length hair. Dyeing my hair or adding an earring would have been unthinkable then.

But not now. This student's change is one of the trifles that are, in turn, one of the signs that there is a major shift in gender identity. It is as has been pointed out in other places, that

Trifles is itself about the nature of reading.[4] One of my students put the importance of Trifles and trifles this way:

> Minor details are always overlooked in every day life, but if we pay attention to those small details they may contain a great deal of information. Time and time again women have always been treated like a minor detail when compared to men. We see this perception as demonstrated in the short story by Susan Glaspell, Trifles. In this short story about the murder of a man by his wife, we see how the men stereotypically treat the women like unintelligent beings, incapable of anything but housework and trivial talk. The women on the other hand figure out how the murder occurred, why it occurred, and protect the wife from being persecuted. The women are portrayed to be weak and trivial when compared with the men, but because of their cleverness and their close attention to minor details the author proves that women are much more wiser than the men, making them the stronger of the two.

It is no longer a surprised that the above was written by a male student. Reading a class is a way of reading the trifles that come our way. Of course as Glaspell's play makes clear that the big answers are to be found in the "minor details [that] are always overlooked in every day life, but if we pay attention to those small details they may contain a great deal of information." This student not only saw how the women in the play solved the crime but paying attention to the facts, he didn't "resist" a reading which would make, in this case, women better than men.

So my project finally took shape. I stopped fighting the facts to fit the theory. As a friend of mine use to say: "you don't beat a theory with the facts, you beat it with a better theory." The facts need to be explained by a theory. I think I now understand why students not only modestly cross (or perhaps androgynously) dress, they also are able to cross-read. In any given class I have had for several semesters allowing for size differences, the clothes my students wear are interchangeable. Perhaps gender is interchangeable also. So as my train made its way through the fog my project started to change shape again.

III. Terminus: A Meshwork of Selves

> This was written for a Fellowship project, not for your students who are generally in the 18/ 19 year-old range. In today's day and age, men and women of my generation think differently, for the most part, but just as men and women think differently, women think differently from other women as men think differently from other men as well. I think we also don't look at something, anything for that matter, and say male over female or vice-versa, as to who would have created the subject in question. Today, though there is that automaton conformity in existence, as a whole, I feel we think more for ourselves. By this I mean, personally speaking, I never act on something and think "well would a man think this way, or am I not being 'girly' enough," or something to that effect.
>
> Alyson Martucci, "Reaction Paper" May 9, 2001

The train arrives at my stop and it is suddenly a balmy late April afternoon. I step on to the ground nearer to home halloed in that green-saturated light that always heralds the end of another school year.

I **am** different; the project has changed, though I fought the idea off for months. Now I am ready to answer the question I posed on page 7: "Is it possible that in spite of our biology, years of social conditioning, the need to have a solid identity, that gender didn't make a difference in reading?"

The answer is simple: yes, gender matters. Although gender is a complicated issue, I will posit two kinds of gender important for pedagogy, the political and the performative.

There can be little doubt that gender will matter as long power inequities based on gender operate in the social sphere. The issues of domestic violence, sexual harassment, inequalities in pay and opportunities for advancement forbid a discounting of gender in or out of the classroom. While gender is one of the main ways one builds identity, using texts like A Doll's House, Hemingway's "Up in Michigan" and Trifles can foreground the way in which gender can both inform and imprison one's identity. Thus, one of the ethical uses of literature is to access a history often glossed over in history books.

The other form of pedagogical gender goes by the odd word: "performativity." In "Performative Utterances" philosopher J.L. Austin notes that performativity "is a new word and an ugly word, and perhaps it does not mean anything very much."[5] For Austin, "in saying what I do, I actually perform that action." For example,

> When I say "I name this ship the Queen Elisabeth" I do not describe the christening ceremony, I actually perform the christening; and when I say "I do" (sc. take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife), I am not reporting on a marriage, I am indulging in it.

Thus when broadening out the concept of performativity to language, the articulation of the idea is the act of that idea; there is not something else beneath it.

I am not a philosopher so I cannot work out the implications of performative utterances, but I do know that for an ugly, meaningless word, Austin's notion of the performative has had a major impact in gender studies. One of the most influential writers using performativity in gender is Judith Butler, most specifically her Bodies that Matter. In noting that gender is "performative", Butler does not mean performance as an activity of some skill to be judged and graded. Nor is it a guise, a theatrical performance, a social mask one wears; though obviously the word looks back to that activity. Rather gender is a habit of being, a manipulation of the deep surface of the postmodern self that can mutate under the pressures of local conditions. Sounding very much like Austin, Butler wants to understand gendered subjectivity "as a history of identifications, parts of which can be brought into play in given contexts and which, precisely because they encode the contingencies of personal history, do not always point back to an internal coherence of any kind" (Bodies that Matter, 331).

I take this to mean that unlike one's biological sex, since gender it is part of one's historical identity, gender can be, like the text of history itself, reshaped, reformed, and reinterpreted. Thus for my students, gender is an existential decision made within the local conditions of a given situation, in this case, the local atmosphere of a community college classroom.

The notion of performative gender also highlights a major shift in feminism. Although it is possible to read my paper as locating a shift in the balance of power from men to women, one of the things we have seen is the end of patriarchy as **the** ruling power structure in the classroom. As Alyson Martucci further says in her reaction paper: "I have never experienced such an example of patriarchy, I assume this is because of the generation gap. To go entirely against the patriarchy fable, as long as I can remember growing up, the girls always dominated in the classroom…women, not all, but more women than men, always have something to say."[6] As Princeton Professor of History Christine Stansell notes "Actually, universities are a paradigmatic case of second wave feminism with a third wave constituency. Those of us who began in the '70s in difficult circumstances are playing before an audience of young women who think our presence [women professors] testifies to the fact that there is no problem."[7] Thus, if we are to move forward in equality in college teaching, we ought to remember for many of our students patriarchy is and never has been an issue.

More importantly, though, what I believe this year has taught me is that my male and female students **perform their identities**. Like hair color, like jewelry, like their courses and their majors, they choose their gender role. William Simon in his Postmodern Sexualities noted that "The social roles we occupy are increasingly experienced…not as natural and fixed representations of the self, not as we experience the constraints of our skins, but as optional appliances, as costumes that celebrate, and at times disguise, *assertions* about who and what we have been, as well as what we are and what we desire to be." (7) We may be witnessing the end of the romantic notion of one true self "born free" that society corrupts and destroys. Rather we may be living into a world or worlds where we are a braided self. Or as theorist and biologist Francisco Varela put it, "the meshwork of selves we carry around."

I saw this most pointedly on the day I was finishing this paper. I stopped in to a colleague's office to get the reference to the Proteus story in The Odyssey. As we were talking in his office doorway, a student I had had last semester stopped in to ask what we were talking about. So I related to her the story Menelaus told Telemachus about how Menelaus returned home and how Telemachus too might find his way also. Menelaus was told that he must go down to the beach and find Proteus who sleeps among the seals for his noonday nap. Here it is in Robert Fagles' translation:

> Soon as you see him bedded down, muster your heart and strength and hold him fast, wildly as he writhes and fights you to escape. He'll try all kinds of escape—twist and turn into every beast that moves across the earth, transforming himself into water, superhuman fire, but you hold on for dear life, hug him all the harder! And when, at last, he begins to ask you questions—in the shape you saw him sleep at first—relax your grip and set the old god free and ask him outright, hero, which of the gods is up in arms against you? How can you cross the swarming sea and reach home at last?' (Book IV, 460-475)

As I finished relating the story, I told her, "it shows the protean nature of truth, that you have to hold on to get the real truth".

"Like there is a real truth," she said ironically.

The very ground we walk on has changed and is shifting. Thus just as one of the powers of literature is its ability to complicate reality by accessing different viewpoints, so too we need a more sophisticated pedagogy that accounts for the "new student" in more than the tired ones of poor attitudes, skills and "performance." This means we must avoid installing new stereotypes, i.e. women are better more nurturing readers than men, thereby replanting one ideal reader with another. Rather we might want to see the classroom as a place where local conditions supercede any of the assumed essentialist or even socially constructed codes.

Also we need a way of looking at our students not as failures but as those who now live much more fully than we ever did into what Daniel Bell called "the disjunction of realms"; the world where the unified self is split and multiplied. The community college is not the last refuge for the academically challenged but the first place where the pluralism of experience can be discussed and explored. For our students the self is a portable configuration that adapts to local conditions. The strict boundaries that make up the isolated, autonomous and occasionally imperial self are disappearing. Our students inhabit a much different world than we did. We do our selves and students no favors by continually berating their lack of skills, their distracted lives, their lack of our values. They and the culture are still changing shape. They are performing the best they can.

Endnotes

[1] This paper is dedicated to those students who I had for the 2000-2001 academic year. Their honesty and interest was immeasurably helpful. I am especially indebted to Jennifer Colon, Edward Duyos, and Alyson Martucci for their work.

[2] Elizabeth A. Flynn, “Gender and Reading,” in Gender and Reading, ed. Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocinio P. Schweickart (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986. For a thoughtful response see Nina Byam, The Feminist Teacher of Literature: Feminist or Teacher,” in Gender in the Classroom: Power and pedagogy Eds. Susan L. Gabriel and Isaiah Smithson (Urbana: U of Illinois Press, 1990)

[3] Quoted in Isaiah Smithson “Introduction: Investigating Gender, Power, and Pedagogy” in Gender in the Classroom: Power and pedagogy Eds. Susan L. Gabriel and Isaiah Smithson, p.13.

[4] See Laura Quinn’s “Trifles as Treason: Coming to Consciousness as a Gendered Reader”, Nicholas J. Karolides, ed., Reader Response in Secondary and College Classrooms (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000).

[5] Philosophical Papers, 3rd ed., J.O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 233-252

[6] Until I took over, the administration of Union’s largest department, English/ Fine Arts/Modern Languages was for several years headed by women. I point this out because there is still a prevalent notion that patriarchy is the model for power structure of colleges. True, many presidents are not women, but as of this writing, Princeton has named as their next president a woman.

[7] Princeton University Hompage, January 15, 2001.

SITTING BY THE RIVER

RECONNECTING STUDENTS TO THE CLASSROOM: A PERSONAL STUDY

Vicki Reback
Union County College
May 2001

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PREFACE: SETTING OUT

Sitting in my English 102 class and reading Siddhartha by Herman Hesse last semester, I asked my students, who were the same age as the central character who was setting out on his search for enlightenment, why they thought he didn't recognize the river and stay by it the first time he was there in his youth. But they saw what he saw: the river was an obstacle in his way, something he had to cross to get someplace else. I wondered, " how many of us lived our lives like this? How many of you are in College because you want to get out of College? For how many of you is College an obstacle in your way, and you are here because you are on your way to somewhere else?" i.e. getting a job, making money, pursuing your real life." They smiled in recognition of the truth -- all but one of my students, a returning adult for whom college was a conscious choice.

That afternoon I realized that they are in school not because they want the learning but because they need the credits, or as McGrath and Spear say: "they do not take themselves seriously as learners of something worth learning, but rather view themselves as engaged in a certification process in which credits are accumulated and requirements are unreasonable obstacles placed in their path" (24-5). Siddhartha has the question within him and it lights his way: they mostly do not yet possess the questions of their lives because they are focusing on getting a grade, getting ahead and getting out, and so miss their place at the river, with little appreciation of how a real education might truly serve them. The story that brings them to college may be full of hopes and dreams for what is often a first generation college student in the family, but the hope is that they will get good grades to get a good job and so become a "success", a reasonable and practical expectation, but too often without a connection to their own dreams or feelings about it all to make the going meaningful. For as one young woman, her voice full of feeling, put it so poignantly after reading an essay about a hunter who hunted his own dreams. *"what do you do if you have no dreams to follow?"*

And herein lies the larger problem of students' disconnection from their education Most of my students see College as an obstacle in their path to getting ahead. It is a way to get certified and not in itself intrinsically valuable. What's missing is a living connection to their own education and access to their own dreams. In the language of Siddhartha, they cross this River (this College) without much awareness of what the potential is to sit by it awhile. However, while it is not feasible, either in fifteen weeks or fifteen pages, to try to solve the students' disconnections from their own experience of education, nevertheless, before I try to describe the more local and particular attempts at reconnection within my own English 102 class which is at the heart of this paper, I think it is important first to at least place this disconnection in a larger philosophical world.

PART I: PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES: IN THE LARGER WORLD

At its simplest telling, devoid of the larger story of one who would be enlightened (i.e. a Buddha), Herman Hesse's Siddhartha is a journey story in the Wisdom tradition of Literature, a sonata in three movements. Initially, he is a young man who is not happy and who decides to leave home in search of answers to his questions. After crossing the river, he finds himself and loses himself many times in different experiences over many years in the larger world. In the final movement, he returns home to the river and decides to sit by it awhile "to learn from it and love it", and in the end, he feels completely present to his experience, and no longer feels separate from anything or anyone on his journey, and he affirms the whole story he has lived.

Perhaps over many years this, too, may happen to some of my students. The older ones may have already recognized that they may have passed the river once without fully being present to it and so have returned to their education now ready to sit awhile.. But I wonder if we can help the students who do not yet "possess the question in themselves" become more connected to their education, for that connection must be made for the information or idea to take hold and become "real". They need *to* *want* to learn something new, *to feel "connected"* to the process of learning itself. Otherwise, they leave before they've really arrived at the river, believing they "value education", but really just following through the obstacle course along the certification track, or as one student wrote: *"I feel like I'm just doing it to get it over with"*.

Their assumptions that school is something you have to endure to get where you're going have taught them to pay the price of being disengaged and disconnected while in school because it will "pay off" later on once their ticket is punched. Hence, many students are missing a real sense of control over their own lives and are without the resources to improve their prospects. *"How can anything I do make a difference"* is a frequent question asked in varying forms in class that involves the ability to affect change somewhere. If they had the tools to learn from themselves and from their past experiences, "to be my own teacher," as does Siddhartha when he leaves teachers behind to go his own way, perhaps they could *Do* something to affect changes in their own life stories.

So when I ask myself, "What will it take for our students to see themselves as learners of something worth learning, my answer is "when they make connections". It lies in teaching in such a way that provides potentially meaningful experiences that they can take home and try on to help them feel a connection between what has been presented and their own lives, so that they can begin to reclaim some sense of wonder in education and find some value in the journey itself, and in hunting their own questions, first inside themselves, then in an increasingly wider and more complex world that they can participate in and relate to. Our classrooms need to be places that engage their dreams, for as Thoreau knew, "A student is in search of his lost heart".

There is support for this need to make connections in studies of the brain because we "quite literally build our own minds". ((Cross 10) "Research provides growing evidence that **learning is about making connections** - whether the connections are established by firing synapses in the brain, the 'ah ha' experience of seeing the connection between two formerly isolated concepts, or the satisfaction of seeing the connection between an abstraction and a 'hands-on concrete application." (Cross 6). Recently, the director of Princeton University's own new McGraw Center for studying Teaching and Learning, J. Mintz, noted, "Some wonderful studies of the brain show that we retain information much longer if we're emotionally connected to the subject matter. Without such a connection, approximately 80 percent of the material learned in a course is forgotten." Hence, learning needs to be an active not a passive process. Students need to make the connections in themselves that constitute meaning. Connected thinking brings the whole body into resonance.

Interestingly enough, there are many signs of institutional efforts to address this issue of disconnection in education. Many colleges are experimenting with learning communities that call for making connections with the ideas and challenges of peers. An increasing number of schools have tried first year seminars to help students better relate to college and others are trying service learning components to help foster connection and relationship between the classroom and the community. Even the summer or year of study abroad is an attempt to bring a student's education into the larger world, to connect the student to another culture as part of a way of enriching their studies.

However, most attempts to reconnect students to their education are institutional projects or programs such as I've already described. There are few examples of particular attempts inside a classroom to try to change the student's relationship to the material in a way that makes them feel more connected to what they are learning, to each other, and to themselves. What follows is my attempt to do that by creating a set of experiences to add to the writing and literature in my particular English 102 and to study what happens in this small river of possibilities.

PART II: A PARTICULAR CLASS: COMING TO THE RIVER

Just as Siddhartha returned to sit by the river in the end, so I want to return to the particular class I am teaching this semester to see what I can learn from my own teaching. What I am studying is my own trying to teach ***"thinking connectedly***". in a way that is local and personal. I did not set out to prove anything in this one semester in my class, nor am I really trying to prove anything in this paper. I am not even able to give the definitive answer on what makes connection or even to define it for everyone else. -- I am studying one classroom - my own - Composition English 102 class this semester with 24 students and trying to pay attention to what their experiences of education were coming in, and then trying to provide them with 13 experiences (see Table 2) through which they may potentially change or deepen that connection and then listening to their responses to what they have made from it all.

This is all amidst teaching reading and writing. The semester begins with Laurens van der Post's "The Wilderness Within" and other essays on our disconnections from our own inner world, and extends through two novels in the wisdom tradition: The Education of Little Tree, the story of a young boy raised by his Cherokee grandparents in "The Way" of living connectedly with the natural world, and Siddhartha. They are also being asked to write papers reflecting critical thinking about one idea they have connected to in each reading and tied back into their own lives, while I am trying to work in the classroom discussions with their questions which they put on the board (#2 of those added 13 experiences), which reflects on the reading and writing.

It was also my intention to use a number of different methods of assessment.

> On the first day of class I will ask them on day one to all write about a page in answer to the question: "What are your feelings about your education to date/" They will not put their names on the front of this paper where it can identify them. but rather on the back of the paper. I will not read their papers but will save them until the last day when I will ask the same question again, with their name and a code on the back. On this same day I will also give them a series of 12 questions to answer about their experience of education to date - with their names on the

back, which I will also give them again at the end to see if anything has, in fact, changed. (See Attached TABLE 1).. I will not explain why I am doing all of this until the end in order to not prejudice the results Further, I will ask two colleagues in the Department, Dr. Tim McCracken and Dr. Allen Ashby, to read these essays and questionnaires for me at the end of the semester, mixed up so that they cannot tell which was written at semester's end and which at the beginning, and they will rate the papers on how well they think the writer is connected to their education, 1-5, one being low and 5 high, and then I'll look at them too and see if I see improvement in this quality of being more connected. Further, I will also create 13 experiences in addition to the other classwork and at the end, I will give a final assessment of these for my own benefit (TABLE 2) --this one they can put their names on which shows them for the first time all the planned experiences they have had and asks them to rate them and to answer questions about the whole semester. Now they can write about the class as part of the answer.

SITTING DOWN :THE CLASS BEGINS:

For the first of the 13 experiences (See Table 2 1:1) we rearrange our desks to face each other in a circle. Someone remarks that there is no back of the room now to hide in. Now we must also learn each other's names so we can talk to each other rather than only to the teacher, or to the back of someone's head. If there is a head of the circle, it is clearly me since that is where they focus their eyes, but my intention is also to open up the conversation so that they can talk with each other, and knowing names makes the conversation personal. I have done this for many years now, but this year at semester's end, I learn what I had hitherto only intuited, that this starting gesture had enormous consequences for them. In fact, for 7 of the 20 respondees this experience got the highest number of blue ribbons, and tied it with another group activity for the highest number of positive responses, getting 11 high votes that rated it in the top 4 of the 13 experiences which had the greatest effect on them.

Why so and how so? I see from their starting essays and questionnaires on their feelings about their education to date that many of them have been significantly damaged by the process: "It started going bad in first grade. I was held back because they said I had dyslexia. From the first grade to the fifth grade I was in slower English classes and I was not happy with school". Another said, "As a young child I never dreaded a day. At the end of fourth grade, the school system tested me for learning disabilities. This situation really knocked down my self-confidence. The other kids called them the "retard rooms". And Jorge comments, "A lot of people in high school (counselors and teachers) told me (actually hinted to me) that College is not for me. I feel that everybody should have the chance and we should go to high school to be prepared for college. I wasn't."

On a circle we are all able to speak and be heard. It weighs in against the dehumanizing influences of other places where they felt themselves to be only numbers, as described by Bill who has transferred to Union County College from Rutgers, which he describes as his worst experience of education to date (see Table 1:3) because even outside of schoolwork "responsibilities like registering, getting meal plans, retrieving mail and so on made the experience very unwelcoming." But for him at semester's end this name game experience, doubled by The PeaceWeaver Talking Circle (see 1:12 on Table 2 Experiences list), still registers powerfully for him, "Now I am amazed that I know everybody and it started with their name. That hasn't happened since high school." For many students who tell stories in their writing about their education to date in which they have felt abused by teachers and schools and made to feel stupid, and so have lost their voices and never ask any questions, this is a first day's small empowerment and entitlement. We are connecting to each other as particular beings with names. In my Final Assessment Lucy's voice echoes others, "I just graduated high school, so for the last 12 years of my life, I always had someone I knew in my class, but now in College, it's different. It gets pretty lonely going to classes and not knowing anyone. So learning people's names was a treat for me". I had almost neglected to put this activity on their list of experiences because it is so familiar to me already and because it seems such a small gesture toward creating a positive learning climate for the whole 16 weeks. But I know now it works.

We are reading first an essay by Laurens van der Post on our lost connection to ourselves and the natural world and so right off when they ask questions on the board, (Experiences Table 2 1:2) they give me my own question back: *"how did all the disconnection happen"*? and *"what can someone do in this modern time to get it back"*? van der Post's "The Instinctive Life" suggests we are so disconnected from our own nature and all of Nature because we are pursuing an increasingly arid and materialistic approach to life, "Increasingly, we plant children in front of TV in which there is no real story" and he tells his own story, growing up in a way "that never separated me from my instincts," (32-4) raised by a Bushman nurse, and the way back, he says in answer to the students' questions, "*what are we to do and "what if you have no dreams to follow"*? is *through "the Instinctive Life", through dreams, intuitions, creativity; a reconnection to the natural world and stories,-* Now they ask, *" But what if someone else is telling your story for you?: ("you're stupid", "you're ugly", etc.*). How do we start a new story for those students here and now, consciously, or give them the tools to go their own way and start one for themselves? We started a dreams and intuitions journal for homework (Table 2, Experiences List 1:3) on that day.

This needing a way to see what story they have been following is in part what the PeaceWeavers (Experiences list #12) illustrates on the last day before I collect their responses. This experience is a Native American style talking stick circle led by an invited group of friends, the PeaceWeavers, who were here for the 12th time for Earth Day. This time we are sitting in a circle on the floor and passing a stick, and people are empowered by their time holding the stick to speak their own truths. Many students who came in nervous seem suddenly transformed and when they get the stick, they speak of stories they say they have never spoken before, of places in their lives they want to change, and of the pressures on them: the jobs they hold; the families they've lost connection to; the time they wish they had more of to do school well and to sit down together like this more when the pressure builds. They seem connected to themselves and to each other and are now fully empowered to speak as well as to listen with full attention.

An older woman student who I would have said was already one who was "connected", told a painful story of reconnection to her own sister because she finally had had a quiet moment and the right space to reflect on it aloud in a meaningful way, and later she wrote, "The Peace Weaver circle was really profound. It illustrates to me how truly disconnected we are from each other." Raymond, a young man from the inner city who has so much pressure on him but asks such wonderful questions on the days he makes it to class, says, "I've shot and been shot at. I need to make some changes in my life". Many just hold the stick and seem choked up.

Later, when I get their written responses, they range from Tom, who also rated the circle in the beginning highly saying , "I never knew anything about my classmates until now. It made me feel more comfortable around them. It brought me closer. I felt a bond." And Tony, who missed at least half of the semester because of pressures from work, made it to this circle and later proudly displayed his artistic response (see list of experiences 1:13), a stick he had found with his little sister in the woods and carved for his family with their name, after telling his mother at Sunday night dinner about the talking stick experience and she said, as he reported back, "why don't we try that all together as a family"? In answer to question #2 on the Final Assessment (see Table 2), ""did any of the 13 experiences matter to you personally"?, he wrote, "The talking stick circle I have taken personally, because I have taken this home and we now get to hear each other's stories. This I feel will bring my family closer to one another." And to question #7 "did any of the outer circumstances in your life change"?, he added, "I now talk to my father, mother, sister and brother because of the talking stick". Jennifer, the student I would say was the most "connected" by her questions and comments in the class clarified the experience which she rated as her number one for me later in her final assessment: "The talking stick circle had a huge impact on me personally. The circle initiated something back into my life that hasn't been present for some time now. I felt connected to my humanity again."

For some it is much smaller: "I don't spit on the ground anymore," one young man from the inner city proudly tells me of what he has gotten from the class and the essays we read, "and I get mad now when I see my friends throwing garbage out the car window." Repair of the earth begins often with such small reconnections.

There are other experiences that seemed to have mattered to many students in the class. Five out of 20 rated the interview with an elder (Experience #4) (usually a grandparent) to find the mythic level of story they were following in their life and to tell it and 9 students of the 20 picked it in their top 4 highest rated experiences. Josie from Nigeria who seemed to have made major leaps in her connection to her own education this semester and who said she felt so at home for the first time in America on the PeaceWeavers Circle, also says of interviewing an elder, "Seeing his sacred story enabled me to learn about my origin, and now I know how to forge ahead." And Elizabeth who often acted skeptical said she, "got to see that my mother's story is incredible and she's my role model even if she doesn't know it." She also valued keeping the "intuitions journal" and listed it as the thing she was proudest of, because "I always had them. I used to take long walks to think about things but I had forgotten this till now." I see she has changed because she is less defensive and able to stay longer through her frustrations. It is a change of heart more than anything else but it affects her attitude toward all her work.

The other biggest success as a class experience worth noting is the group collaboration for presenting chapters of Little Tree (See Table 2 Experience 1:6). Four students placed it first in their preferences and 10 put it in the top 4 experiences. It was the weakest students who liked it best but even the best students gave it high ratings. This leads me toward noticing that all the top rated experiences were interpersonal and that there must be a real lack of time or opportunity for social/human connections, a real lack of community in the community college experience.

ASSESSMENT: STUDYING THE RIVER

As described earlier, I had set up several forms of assessment of this classroom study: from students, from myself and from colleagues. When Dr. Tim McCracken and Dr. Allen Ashby met to read my students' papers to assess whether they were more connected to their education at semester's end than they were in the beginning, they disagreed on what '"connections" meant; moreover, while their time reading the papers was appreciated and we all got to share conversation about the project, little really came out of their reading and their responses only added more questions to my own. Hence, I turned back to the students own assessments of their experiences and themselves, and then to my own intuitions and understanding about what it all means.

In many student responses they speak of changes of heart:

> Darrin writes: I now understand that I am not the only person concerned with the out of control, fast paced world we live in and the negligence we show towards ourselves and the things around us. The (Peaceweaver) meeting has touched me in a way where I now know that I have to slow down and that we are part of a whole and what we do affects the world, so we have to ease from this race we're running and take care of the things we are connected with."
>
> Laura says, "I know myself better. I have connected with myself. I now believe there is something in me that can help me live and deal with all other creatures. Every creature matters. I can rely on my instincts and intuitions."
>
> And Ray writes, "I realized there were many things I never confronted before and now was the best time to start. I saw a news story about how Americans sleep 3 hours less than they did 20 years ago. What are we in such a rush to do"?
>
> Sam "went out and planted a tree" When he came in September, he had said education was difficult and pressure, but leaving, he says it is "somewhat interesting" because the teacher "brings the outside world into the classroom, and "one thing that sticks out in my head is that the rainforest is being cut down, 10 football fields a minute".

> Jennifer, said "she was inspired to think from inside out and to go out into the world feeling empowered and connected to nature and others." "I felt connected to my humanity again", she says about the PeaceWeavers; and she writes in the Final Assessment, "I don't mean forgetting that I am human; I mean forgetting that we all are human."

From my perspective, I saw change in all but 3 of my 24 students. There were 3 more who withdrew, but that doesn't necessarily mean those 3 didn't feel a connection to themselves even in going. One young man in a half way house who left midsemester wrote, "this stuff is really deep. Sacred stories come from within and blossom like a flower." Besides, fifteen weeks is a short time, even for those who stay, to affect real change, and often the places you see the changes are in conversations and questions or are cumulative and hard to pinpoint. Still, it is clear that their experience of the teacher can also affect everything, including their own self-concept and motivation for learning. When a teacher believes in them or, more importantly, helps them believe in themselves, they reconnect more easily to the class. "It was the experience of my teacher that started to make me think if this is what I want, not what others want of me. I will remember the approach you used when teaching this class ten years from now." says George.

While it is difficult to make learning alive for students who come without heart in the process to begin with, if learning is about making connections, then academics cannot just be aimed at a disembodied head. We need to teach students how to live into the ideas. For critical and creative thinking to take hold in the hearts and minds of the learners, it must be "connected" holistically to a learner who values the processes and fruits of the learning, who can sit down, like Siddhartha, by the river and listen and watch and wait attentively, open to what dreams will come.

PART III: CONCLUSIONS: LEARNING TO LOVE THE RIVER

I learned some things from this experiment in my own classroom, though not always what I expected to learn, and there are many more things that happened through the conversations in class between the students, the literature and their writing that I am not able to bring into focus here because the scope of this paper does not permit it. Here are the thoughts that resurface when the day is done and I am sitting in my classroom, distilling what happened in my English 102 class this Spring 2001.

What mattered for me did not necessarily matter for them. The two pedagogic devices I found the most useful and learned the most from were their questions which they put on the board each day to start class in response to their reading (Experiences Table 2:2), and the exit passes they wrote as a one minute paper at the end of each class discussion of *Siddhartha.*(Table 2:10). The questions helped me begin class discussions and connected me to their responses in the reading, and the one minute exit writing helped me see what stuck in each class, individually and collectively, and where I needed to pick up the discussion again to help them each go forward. I would do both of these experiences again, though it is interesting that what helped me teach connections didn't necessarily help them make connections. .

What mattered most to them were the experiences where they were drawn to connections with other people. The classroom is the river for my students and it is personal. They are disconnected from the classroom experience because they feel it to be impersonal and apart from themselves and their real lives, which await them somewhere else. In many classrooms they are names without faces to teachers for whom they are, in a sense, interchangeable, and so they do not get to look eye to eye with their peers. This is why the starting circle is so valuable and leaves a lasting impression for so many. They are seen and they see each other. They have a name and a face and a voice and so does the teacher.

They need a space in which to listen to themselves and feel heard. This real internal quieting and deep honesty happened with the PeaceWeaver experience when each person's story echoed another's half-forgotten truths, but it does not happen often enough in most classrooms. Yet this is the kind of experience which can stop students' rushing to get across the river and out of college before they have really arrived at its deepest promise: to make their lives more meaningful, and hence to answer the earlier question," what do you do if you have no dreams to follow".

Sadly, there is little community in community college. We need to make up for some of that loss in our own classrooms if we expect our students to be connected to their communities in the future. It seems clear that many students liked the interview with the family elder because it made their family ties stronger and so made them part of a greater circle. Similarly, the PeaceWeaver circle also enlarged the whole concept of family to "all my relations." Our students need social connections and to feel they are part of something together or it is "very lonely" as many of them say - they do not spend time as many students do in four year schools in the cafeteria or the dorms, or as I did talking over ideas with friends for hours. For those students who feel alienated from education, the connections to each other help them to know they're not alone in feeling alone. This was also the power of the group collaboration on the chapters of *Little Tree.* They could help each other in a real way instead of feeling in competition with their peers or isolated from them, and so derive more pleasure from their studies.

In the end Siddhartha returned to the river that was his life and in sitting by it, he learned to love it. Those students who have made connections to the experiences in the class and to themselves, if not perhaps to all of education, have more of their lives that they now know and love as well. Or at least there is the capacity for love and for empathy in a truly connected person. Sitting by the river means looking another in the eye, sharing some connection with peers or family or "humanity". College is not just then an abstraction, an obstacle, but friendly, and worthy of love itself, as Siddhartha learns in the end, sitting by the river. We reclaim our dreams by facing them: in each other, in our selves. This is the power of a circle, or a conversation that is "real". The classroom is a space to remember our selves and there is time enough to sit awhile and feel the connections. Still, the full journey takes more than one semester and one class. Sometimes it takes returning years later to the same place to reclaim one's own story. But this is possible in a community college. Even a good student like Siddhartha takes 20 or more years to return to the river and see it whole.

TABLE 1

Some Questions About Your Education to Date

1. What three words best describe education for you?
2. What has been the best experience in your education to date? Be specific
3. What has been your worst experience? Be as specific as possible.
4. On a scale of 1-10, 1 being low and 10 being high, how much does education matter in your life?
5. What would you like to change about education?
6. Name one of your most disliked teachers and describe the qualities that made them unlikeable.
7. Name one of your favorite teachers and describe the qualities that made them special.
8. As a result of your experiences with one or more of your favorite teachers, has there been anything that carried over into your personal life and changed you in any way? Explain.
9. What, if any, has been the most meaningful reading assignment that a teacher has ever given you? How did it affect you?
10. Has anything that ever happened to you in class caused you to go out and do extra work outside of class on your own? Explain.
11. As a result of any teacher's actions or assignment, have you felt more alive or connected to the world? If so, what happened?
12. As you can see, I'm trying to elicit questions about your experience of education to date. You don't have to answer this one, but can you tell me one valuable question that I should have asked to learn more about your experience?

TABLE 2

TEACHING EXPERIENCES TO FOSTER THINKING CONNECTEDLY

1. Consider the 13 experiences we tried this semester as part of class in addition to the reading and writing and class discussions, as listed below, and rank them in their order of their importance and effectiveness from your perspective of how

important they were to you, 1 being high and 13 being low

1_____ Sitting on a Circle and Learning Each Other's Names
2_____ Students' Questions on Board to Initiate Class Discussion of the Essays
3_____ Remembering Dreams and Intuitions --Dream Journal and Intuitions Recorded
4_____ Interview of Elder or Family Member for Seeing Their Sacred Story
5_____ Peer Editing and In-Class Group Collaboration to Help with Writing Papers
6_____ Group Collaboration for Discussing and Presenting Little Tree Chapters
7_____ Changing One Routine: Waking in Natural Time by your own Will Power instead of by Alarm
8_____ Classmate As Writing Buddy to Critique and Support Your Writing Process
9_____ Your Questions to Siddhartha as Your Entry Ticket to Class
10____ One-Minute Paper: Your Strongest Connection to Class as your Exit Ticket
11____Life As A River: Mapping Siddhartha's life Story (and Your Own)
12____Talking Stick Circle with The PeaceWeavers Day Experience and response
13____ Artistic Imaginative Response to David Abram visit and/or PeaceWeavers

2. Did anything in particular in this set of 13 experiences matter to you personally? If so, please specify which and elaborate.
3. Did these experiences help you connect yourself more to the reading and/or writing? Explain.
4. Besides the experiences above, did any of the reading, class discussions, or writing we did carry over into your personal life and lead you to change any beliefs or ways of thinking or acting in your life? Explain and give any specifics.
5. Did any of your ideas about education change over this semester? If so, how?
6. What are you proudest of that you did in, or for, or as a consequence of this class this semester?
7. Did any of the outer circumstances in your life change in any significant way over the course of this semester affecting your participation or your motivation or interest in school? i.e. work, health, living situation? Explain.
8. What is the best question that you have asked this semester?
9. Did you feel uncomfortable with any of the 13 experiences listed above that we tried? If so, which one, and if you are comfortable with telling me, why?
10. Apart from teaching writing, and sharing in discussion of some readings, what do you think is the purpose of the course for me, your teacher?
11. What was the best moment in the class for you to date?
12. What was the worst moment in the class?
13. In your writing this semester it has been important for me to help you find ways to personally connect to what you are reading. On a scale of 1-10, (1 is low and 10 is high), how well do you think I have done so far?
14. As per the above question of making personal connections in your writing, how well do you think you have done so far? (1 is low and 10 is high).
15. What do you think you will remember about this course 5 years from now?
16. What is the best connection you think you have made this semester?

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The Affective Domain in Online Education

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Princeton University Mid-Career Fellowship Program
May 2001

Education involves more than the transmission of facts and skills. Education entails an experience between students and faculty, students and students. Education involves an exchange of ideas, a testing of ideas, in an environment of respect and encouragement. Online courses contribute content, but they can they replace the "context" of the classroom? Can online courses deliver on the affective domain, that challenging of student ideas which occurs in the same time at the same place? The question remains and haunts us: are these courses technologically-enhanced correspondence courses?

The "affective domain" involves "the application of mental processes to the world of feelings, interpersonal relationships, and inanimate objects to which the person is attached..." and "...the complex, subjective experiences that have many components including physical, cognitive, organizing, and expressive, as well as highly personal, subjective meanings" (Huitt 1). Experts on adult learners have coined the term "andragogy" (the art and science of helping adults learn) and indicate that "the psychological climate is even more important" (Rassman 4) in distance learning environments.

Most educators concede that the affective domain (sometimes not measurable, therefore discounted) is a factor in student retention and student success. The affective domain can involve support for student learning, structure, high standards, being respectful of student ideas, inviting questions, challenging students to re-think and to revise ideas. The affective domain involves a professor who has a sense of humor, a sense of fairness; one who encourages and invites student collaboration. The mindful teacher is always prepared for the "teachable moment," a serendipitous moment which is unplanned. One need only recall his/her truly inspiring classroom teachers to grasp this "mysterious" affective domain.

Atlantic Cape Community College has been offering online courses since the fall of 1996. Many faculty teach the *same* course in both the traditional (T sections) and in the online format (O sections). A survey was distributed to both groups of students who experienced the *same* teacher for the *same* course, but in *different* delivery modes. Would there be a difference in the affective domain? Data from 12 faculty, 24 classes were considered. The courses surveyed were: U.S. History I, English 101, Introduction to Hospitality Industry, English 102, Abnormal Psychology, Principles of Management, Word Processing I, Cultural Anthropology, Intermediate Algebra, Introduction to Literature, Business Communications. and Intermediate Programming C++.

The same form was distributed to all students, both online and traditional sections. Some demographic material was collected. Most questions allowed only for a "yes" or "no" response with no explanatory information given. Both groups of students were given the opportunity to add additional comments at the end. The faculty members distributed the survey for traditional students in class. The online survey was placed in each student's e-mailbox with buttons for responses, a text box for comment. When the online student submitted the response, it immediately was sent to this researcher's email account. All surveys were anonymous. **One hundred seventy-nine traditional students; one hundred nine online students completed and returned the survey.** The surveys were distributed during the first week of December (about three weeks before the end of the semester).

The faculty who participated and volunteered their students have a total of 250 years teaching at the college level, an average of 21 years. They have taught their subjects in the traditional mode for many years. They are experienced faculty; most have participated in mentoring programs for online faculty and intensive consultation with the academic computing staff. They are offered advice on use of multimedia to support objectives and structuring the course. All have been advised that email and voice mail should be responded to "in a timely manner" and not ignored. Most also understand from the experience of previous online faculty that structure and firm deadlines are important. Most are also aware that collaborative learning is important to support content.

Ninety-seven percent of T students responded that their instructors were enthusiastic about the course; 90% of O students responded in the affirmative to that question. One hundred percent of T students responded that their instructor promptly replied to voice mail/ email; 90% of the O students responded affirmatively. On that question, 41 T students wrote in the comment "did not apply." One assumes that students in traditional classes meet with professors before, during, or after class and rarely use voice mail or email. Ninety-seven percent of T students indicated that the course had a defined structure; 95% of O students answered in the affirmative to structure. Ninety percent of T students felt that they were a "community of learners"; 87% of the O students felt part of a community.

A high percentage of responses in the online sections were by female students (79%). The demographics for ACCC online courses, fall 2000, indicate that 67.2% of online students were female; the high percentage of responses at this late date in the semester by females may indicate that they are more likely to succeed in online courses (by the thirteenth week of the semester, the audience is of the successful students).

Knowing the faculty who participated, I was struck by one faculty member in particular who is known for his dry, "classy" sense of humor, who is not one to tell jokes, but who can make a side comment that resonates. **To the question "do you laugh in class" only 22% of his O students replied with the affirmative. In his T section, 100% of the students replied in the affirmative.** Several of those T students also wrote in comments: "Professor T. is an 'awesome' professor. The collaboration and student projects really 'make' this class." **Very few students (33%) in that same professor's O class responded in the affirmative to the question: does your class require student collaboration? In the same**

course/same teacher, the T students responded to the same question in the affirmative (94%).

The majority of students (66%) in O classes are over the age of 29; while in the T classes the majority of students (50%) are under the age of 22. In O classes 61% of students are employed more than 30 hours per week, compared to 29% in T classes. Interestingly, the number of miles from campus was not a factor in selecting the type of class: 66% in O sections, 60% in T sections live more than 20 miles from the campus.

Although most students in both environments indicate that collaboration is important to learning (O 70%; T 78%), the experiences indicate that students collaborate in O sections 50% and in T sections 87%. There was a difference in the humor in the classroom: O classes, 50% affirmative; T sections, 92% affirmative.

In these two areas there is a marked difference in the software technology in use. The students in the online sections surveyed were evenly divided: six sections use WebCT; six sections use FirstClass. In the O sections, 65% using FC answered yes to laughing in class, while 42% using WebCT responded in the affirmative. As to the question on collaboration, in the O sections 69% using FC responded yes to the use of collaborative learning, while 51% using WebCT responded in the affirmative.

One more item to note: the advising question. In the O sections 75% of the students are self-advising; 50% in the T sections. Could this be a factor in retention, particularly in online classes? (see Lowe 95).

The survey of faculty asked for the success rate in both the traditional and online sections. Faculty supplied numbers of beginning students and numbers of students who had received a grade of C or above. Grades of W, I, D, or F were not calculated. **Overall, the success rate in traditional sections was 75% versus online sections of 60%.** What about the "unheard voices"? Students who do not succeed in online classes are not surveyed. This survey was distributed after those students had stopped logging in. Why did they not continue with the course? Was there something missing in the affective domain?

Forty-three students in the T classes (24%) wrote a comment. Not one comment was negative. Representative comments were:

- "I love my professor's ability to teach. It's awesome."
- "...level of interaction makes or breaks class experience."
- "I like the interaction...a lot of material ...easier to digest."
- "...very helpful teacher..."
- "I can honestly say this has been the best class that I have taken at ACCC. I thoroughly enjoyed it. Prof. R. enjoys teaching and I love her knowledge and enthusiasm."
- "...Lots of interaction! Keep up the great work and big smiles, Prof. Bailey."
- "I really liked working in groups and having discussions. It let's you learn more."
- "The teacher keeps us thinking."
- "Prof. Kaplan is an excellent, well-balanced instructor...a hard class, but worth the work. I gained a lot of insight and knowledge."
- "...awesome teacher..."
- "...peer interaction is something I always look forward to..."
- "We have good communication in class. I learned a lot from this teacher."
- "Prof. Marino is an excellent teacher who is very helpful."

A higher percentage of students in the O classes (forty-four students, 41%) wrote a comment, indicating both positive and negative experiences. Representative comments were:

- "I am currently employed in the casino business and this course has broadened my knowledge of the needs that the business has, the problems it faces, and the employment forecasts. I know that this course could have been very boring, but the teacher has made it interesting and keeps it interesting. Home based courses are very good for me, and I wish that all my home based courses were taught as Prof. A. does hers. Great teacher!"
- "I have learned nothing. Taking this class has been a waste of money since I don't feel I learned anything new or useful."
- "...more work than a traditional class, and it's difficult to discipline oneself, especially at home."

- "I did not get a response to several assignments that I would have liked to have before the mid-term assignment."
- "I have not been able to put in enough time that is required."
- "Why don't I just go to the bookstore, buy the textbook, sit at my computer, and hack it out that way. That is pretty much how it went anyway."
- "This has been my first online class. It is so well organized. I look forward to another online class."
- "This experience was great. I have always disliked history until now."
- "This is a great class; I learned more than expected."
- "This was not a good choice for me. I feel as though I am trying to teach myself something I know nothing about. .... some online subjects are not for everyone, and this was certainly not the one for me."
- "...it is very easy to forget about the class entirely."
- "An online course is a lot more difficult that I thought it would be. It has required more time than I thought it would."
- "Taking online classes requires a lot of organization, and you need to really know what's involved in taking these courses this way as they seem harder. You need to devote more time than you expect...you can easily get overwhelmed and behind in your work."
- "This system is very difficult for second language speakers. I will choose to go to school for my classes."
- "I preferred more interaction with other students."
- "...great teacher. I wasn't sure about this online class in the beginning...with a few encouraging words from Prof. R. I gained confidence and moved on. Now I even try to help my classmates when I can. I enjoy it."
- "Taking this online course has been a godsend for someone like me who works full time..I wish ACCC would offer more online courses..."
- "...these online courses have made it possible for me to obtain a college education..."
- "If it wasn't for online, I would not have been able to take this class. My full-time work hours do not allow me to be in the classroom."
- "My education would take forever if I didn't have this opportunity. When you have a family, you can't leave home too many nights. ...Prof. Y is great...this was a great class."
- "I really enjoy Dr.K's class. She encourages me to write and read more. ...positive classroom environment...I was very nervous, but I feel confident after having Dr. K. that I can do anything my younger counterparts can. I have just returned to school after 13 years and 3 children."
- "This is my third online class, and Dr. K. is by far the best online teacher that I have had, as well as one of my favorite all-around teachers. She gives great feedback and is an excellent reminder of how beautiful language is. Thank you Dr. K."
- "This class was not a positive experience for me."
- "I am sorry that I missed the chance to have this professor in person."
- "...there is a 'deathly' quiet (next to NO communication)...no encouragement from the instructor...responses are 5 - 7 days later, if at all..."

- "This is my first online course and I don't like it. There is no interaction, and it makes it very difficult to learn."
- "Online courses are fine if you are self disciplined and have basic knowledge of the subject. ... courses that require an exchange of ideas and perceptions are more beneficial in the traditional classroom. I would like to see online courses that require some classroom meetings...maybe once a month."

The faculty who participated in this research are extraordinary professors. They are committed to the community college experience; they support students. Their written remarks about the two environments were:

- "Spontaneity which occurs in the traditional class is almost non-existent in the online class."
- "I require two group/problem solving exercises in the traditional classes that can't be duplicated in the online classes."
- "Our traditional course can provide students with the forum for a class presentation...this is impossible online unless multimedia is used by the entire class. The online class, however, has immediate access to library and web research. It is also a paperless method of distributing handouts."
- "I provide guest speakers, videos and property tours in the traditional class. I did open up the tour to online students; two were able to attend."
- "Looking back I see that the less involved online class was much less successful than the less involved traditional class. I wonder if the affective domain isn't really all that much more important online? That would be a real crux: that the thing that is harder to foster online is the element that is the most crucial....Responses from online students felt like they were answering the assignment rather than exploring something."

- "The affective area in online courses is the weakest. I have not seen any available technology to increase "affective" learning online. The online course is content driven. Daily discussion of cases/topics occurs in the traditional classroom. Very little, if any, discussion occurred in the online class."
- "The traditional class is geared more to discussion of the subject. Online is wonderful as far as instructional process, except for the minimal class interaction."
- "I think students are more likely to participate in the online class perhaps because it is not face-to-face. Some are less intimidated."
- "There are several learning activities that I do in the traditional class that I am not able to do online (or at least I haven't been able to figure out how to do them). The tech department is working on translating these."
- "Trips to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City and to the Archaeological and Anthropological Museum at the University of Pennsylvania are almost impossible for online students to attend."
- " One morning as the literature class began, Alina a young African-American woman commented that she had heard that an African-American poet had died. I smiled, thanked her for reminding me and then left the planned class activities to relate the life and work of Gwendolyn Brooks, Pulitzer Prize winning poet who had died that day. We then spent a half hour in the anthology reading her poems. As a student read "We Real Cool," Alina said: "that's it; that's the poem I heard read on the radio this morning." Her enthusiasm spread through the class. I made a mental note to relay this information to the online section. By the time I taught another class, attended a meeting, answered voice mail, checked snail mail, drove home, made

dinner, communicated with my husband and children, then logged online; I was looking for student responses and completely forgot about Gwendolyn Brooks. The teachable moment had vanished."

- "I found a recipe for Emily Dickinson's Black Cake (updated for modern ovens) on the internet. I copied it for my traditional students and sent it to the online students. That weekend I made the cake. The traditional students laughed as the cake oozed out of the pan. I cautioned both sections "not to try this at home." The online students, however, missed the laughter and the flavors."

The majority of faculty members felt that the affective domain is important to education. They also felt that the online sections were more content driven and given to more memorization. Some felt that successful online students did freely comment on the course and did participate in class discussions.

For many students, especially older, working students, online courses (anytime, anyplace) and the asynchronous discussion boards that accompany a class fulfill students' needs. Students are grateful for the opportunity to continue their education at a time when many could not do so. Not all students, however, will opt for the alternative. As most faculty and administrators repeat: this mode is not for every student. Two examples come to mind.

Gina T. is a working mother of an 8 year old; she worries about missing class when her daughter is sick. Gina is very conscientious about her classes; she studies and worries over them. She has a computer at home and is extremely organized. Gina is a perfect candidate for online education. When asked why she drives to classes instead of "telecommuting," she smiles and responds: "this is my therapy. I feel good being in class with the students and the teacher."

Eighteen year old Elijah S. lives one hour from campus in Cape May County. Elijah drives two hours per day to take classes at the main campus. When asked why he did not take advantage of the classrooms near his home, he replied: "I like to come here and check out the girls. I don't mind the drive. I like the scenery." For some students the "virtual" classroom will not replace the traditional one.

More research should be completed. Educators should be reading and discussing why and how technology is used. One of the experts assessing the technology that educators use is Jason Ohler. Ohler makes one think of the consequences and requires educators to answer questions before leaping in. From his bookquotes:

"Three variations of the Catch77 of the technological age: 1. We do, because we can. 2. Because we can, we must. 3. Yes! whether we need to or not" (www.jasonohler.com 27).

"The science of teaching is knowing a number of different methodologies. The art is knowing when to use which" (26).

"Why we can't judge computer use in schools quantitatively: imagine advising people to use their blenders or their electric pencil sharpeners just because they have them. Imagine judging whether or not people are good users of automobile technology by how often they drive their car. In fact we consider people who walk rather than drive to the corner store good users of automobile technology because they know when NOT to use it" (11).

In Ohler's book *Taming the Beast: Choice and Control in the Electronic Jungle*, he challenges educators to evaluate the use of technology and to use it "effectively, creatively, and wisely in pursuit of learning and teaching" (2). He cautions that information technology tools are so powerful that they "would enhance us as a community or diminish us....Technology disconnects as well as connects, debilitates as well as empowers, enslaves as well as liberates....We can decide on the kind of community we want and then create technology to support it, rather than the other way around. We can take back the future" (7).

As educators we must continue to evaluate the technology in light of our course objectives and activities. We cannot become wedded to one technology or software. **Can more affordable and available videostreaming technology substitute for some of the affective domain? Can a particular software mimic the traditional classroom environment more effectively than others?**

We should be reading and discussing more works by technologists who force us to ask difficult questions. **Can students participate in the socialization process in a virtual environment? How important is the psychological/affective environment to the cognitive domain? Are some academic subjects more suitable to the online environment than others? Can critical thinking skills be effectively taught in the online environment? Should we guarantee that courses be offered in both environments to satisfy the needs of students who opt out of the online environment? Should we be more vigilant about advising, especially developmental and second language students who may learn better with the more affective/psychological/face-to-face support of the traditional classroom? Should we permit students under the age of 24 to bypass the affective/socialization process of the traditional classroom? What are the long-range societal implications?**

The online environment is still a primitive space for teachers and students. The affective domain is diminished in the online space. Educators have new hammers; let's hope we don't see everything as a nail, lest we become the teacher who is driven to distraction by thinking: "Hurry up, you're late. Everything's changing and there's no time to think about it. Get moving before you and your students fall behind. We'll worry about where we're going when we get there. And does anyone have any idea why the printer is not working?" (Ohler 1). As educators we need to remember that the "Flash"-ier course is not necessarily the one that will retain students. Students need to think critically and to have their thinking both challenged and validated. Those courses will survive.

Survey available: http://www.atlantic.edu/~russell/survey/survey.htm

Raw data available: http://www.atlantic.edu/~russell/survey/results.htm

With thanks to the administrators at Atlantic Cape Community College who supported this project: Drs. May, Armao, and Wall.

With appreciation to the technical specialists at Atlantic Cape: Maryann Carol, Cheryl Knowles, and Michelle Bevan.

With special thanks and appreciation to my colleagues who graciously allowed me to survey and study their traditional and online classes: Profs. Albano, Bailey, Barbieri, Kaplan, Klem, Marino, McArthur, Reber, Soifer, Thoren, and Yoa.

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Recommendations to Fortify Student Services: Reorganization, Consolidation, and Program Integration

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May 25, 2001

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Introduction and Background

Cumberland County College is a public, co-educational two-year institution within the New Jersey community college system. Since its inception in 1966, the college has been committed to providing quality, affordable education on an open access basis to all residents of the county. This 500 square mile county is situated along New Jersey's southwest coastline fronting the Delaware River. It is surrounded by Salem, Atlantic, Cape May, and Gloucester counties.

Despite its proximity to Atlantic City and Philadelphia (within an hour's commute), the county remains one of the most sparsely populated counties in the state of New Jersey. The population (142,000) represents a diverse mixture of ethnic cultures unusual for a rural community and includes a race/ethnic composition that is approximately 61 percent white non – Hispanics, 20 percent African American, 18 percent Hispanic, and 13 percent from Asian and American Indian groups.

Approximately 90 percent of the total enrollment comes from within the county. The college has a small, but significant foreign student enrollment although the bulk of other enrollments are from adjacent counties. When the College first opened its doors in 1966 it was designed for 500 students on a campus that included five buildings and six degree programs. Today, the college has a total enrollment of 2,739 (fall 2000) and academic programs now include 56 different Associate Degree programs and options, 20 Academic Certificates, 22 Career Certificate programs and 7 Short-term Training programs. New courses and programs are being developed to continue to respond to community and employer needs.

The college has distinguished itself as one of the best comprehensive community colleges in the state of New Jersey. Much of this success can be attributed to its student services division. Somewhat scattered throughout the campus, the decentralized student services staff occupies three of the college's seven buildings, all of which students need to visit in order to enroll. Recently, the institution received 12 million dollars in Chapter 12 funding, half of which is earmarked to expand, refurbish and transform the Student Center into a comprehensive enrollment services complex. In anticipation of this project, this paper was written to identify current problems and make recommendations for the Student Services Division to provide an even higher quality and greater scope of services than it currently delivers.

The benchmarks of performance the staff currently maintains are quite high. The student services division at Cumberland has achieved some impressive accomplishments, for example:

- The Educational Opportunity Fund Program (EOF) has the distinction of being named the top-performing program in the state.
- Minority enrollment of African American and Hispanic students has exceeded the county demographic population statistics of its county residents.
- As student enrollment and FTE of neighboring community colleges have declined, Cumberland's enrollment has maintained or steadily increased its enrollment over the past 5 years.
- Retention rates of entering freshman have increased 11.5 percent since 1998 as a result of mandated freshman orientation courses.
- After a 15- year absence, intercollegiate athletics were recently reintroduced. The teams have enhanced school spirit and enabled the college to recruit in geographic markets for students who seek intercollegiate athletic opportunities.
- Very recently, the college joined the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), a national database service that enabled us to empirically demonstrate that our transfer rates are among the best in the state. A recent Middlestates report cited Cumberland's articulation agreements and transfer rates as commendable.

- Student services coordinates campus-wide academic advisement for all degree-seeking students. The advisement center serves as the hub of advisement for all faculty, counselors, management team staff and part-time advisors.
- "Project Assist", a state funded support services program for students with learning disabilities, assists the most academically challenged college students become successful.
- The Financial Aid Office coordinated annual awards to 26 percent of the student body totaling 3.5 million dollars in academic year 1999-2000. This office is under great pressure to provide prompt, accurate service to residents of New Jersey's lowest per capita income county. Student default rates are among the state's lowest.

Issues of Organization and Effectiveness

Like many institutions, Cumberland has problems that result from rigid boundaries, fixed job descriptions, lines of authority that have become too firmly established, and an exaggerated importance of territory. As pointed out by Zoglin (1981), one American institution that prides itself on the ability to respond quickly and appropriately to its constituents' desires is the community college. Its history is one of adapting to situations by adding new functions to those initially assigned to it. However, the responsiveness Zoglin refers to is hampered by two problems: insufficient communication among the academic and student services units of the institution; less than adequate computer support services which are essential for student affairs to maintain is current level of performance standards. Both of these problems stem from the organizational structure of the institution.

Over the past several years, the rate of change at Cumberland has accelerated. The curriculum has been transformed with many new academic programs and options that were introduced at a very rapid pace. Many student services operations depend on clear authoritative processes from a central office that triggers other support mechanisms. Decisions sometimes are made in isolation that could have been fine-tuned had they been jointly determined.

The following are recent examples of a lack of coordination and communication between Academic and Instructional Affairs, Student Services, and the Computer Center.

Example 1: An academic division changes prerequisites for courses. This is approved first by the academic division and division chairperson. Then, the Dean of Instructional and Academic Services distributes a summative memo in the summer with all curriculum actions acted upon throughout the year. Minutes of the Academic Council meetings are also distributed college wide. If the Computer Center staff is not properly instructed on changes, then students, when they attempt to register, are unnecessarily stopped at the registration terminal. The Computer Center staff does not report to either the Academic nor Student Affairs divisions and are sometimes left out of the loop or simply not instructed to keep pace with the prerequisite changes. This recurrent phenomenon bottlenecks registration. With Web-based registration on the horizon, it is imperative that academic, student affairs and the Computer Center work with a high level of accurate communication and implementation.

Example 2: Some traditional academic affairs functions are contained in the Student Services division at Cumberland, Cooperative Education, Academic Advisement and Freshman Orientation Courses (FOC). The college's Co-Op/Career Counselor has developed over 50 credit-bearing internship and cooperative education positions, however, just one student has been placed for credit. The Academic Advisement Program is strong but needs support from the academic unit with new student orientations. The required FOC program is also organized in student affairs, and as a result, full-time faculty do not feel ownership in this highly successful retention initiative and do not participate in it. Counselors teach most of the courses but the absence of our skilled faculty is felt, particularly in courses taken by academically strong students who need early exposure to their content fields.

Example 3: Several years ago the Advisement Center assumed the role of caretaker for curriculum sheets that govern degree requirements. Curriculum changes are forwarded to the Computer Center by the Advisement Office staff where degree audit installations are made for new degree and certificate programs. Inconsistencies are found with the college catalog. Also, the degree audit program does not work properly. This frustrates advisors and students, slows down the advisement and registration process and promotes errors. A year ago, the college hired a computer consulting firm to assess our information technology services. A detailed evaluation of our current technology was issued replete with concerns and recommendations that focused directly on student affairs (Blackwell Associates, 2000).

Example 4: The Career Certificate and Short Term Training Programs have created admissions procedural inconsistencies that not only confuse but cause student affairs staff an enormous amount of work. As non-degree students, those who enrolled in certificate programs now are exempt from basic skills testing, remediation and orientation courses. Upon completing their certificate program, students frequently continue onto degree programs; certificate programs were developed with this in mind and are marketed this way. Students submit a *Curriculum Change Form* to move from certificate to degree programs. At this time, student services offices are to address the needs of these students who have not been remediated. Procedures to address basic skills testing and remediation after other courses have successfully been taken are cumbersome at best. Furthermore, students are frustrated when they are told they must return to basic skills for remediation after completing all or some college level courses toward a certificate. The Dean of Instruction and Academic Services has instructed that these issues be dealt with by the Student Services staff on a case-by-case basis.

These problems can be attributed to the current organizational structure of the college. At present, the college maintains four dean positions: Academic Affairs, Student Services, Development, and Business and Administrative Services. Bifurcation is a frequently cited word used to refer to the lack of communication between the Academic and Student Affairs units of an academic institution. It is extremely applicable at Cumberland as well. These two units collaborate through their respective deans in senior staff meetings and phone calls. Faculty and counselors, division chairpersons and directors, technical assistants, administrative assistants and secretaries in the two units of the college do not communicate formally for work purposes.

College-wide, there are eight full-time computer/technology positions reporting to three different Deans. The Director of the Administrative Computing Center reports to the Dean of Business and Administrative Services. The instructional unit has an Assistant Dean for Instructional Technologies and several computer technicians while other computing staff are disbursed throughout the organization. None of the /technology staff report to the Student Services Division. There is no person accountable for campus-wide computer services.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendation 1: Combine Academic Affairs and Student Services units

With both units reporting to one individual, a Dean or Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, there is greater likelihood that counselors and faculty will discuss work issues and student services directors and division chairpersons will collaborate more. The chief administrator will coordinate the operational processes of the student services staff who implement the curriculum developed by the instructional unit members.

In the 1980s, the institution supported a Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs Position. This position unified the two divisions. It was, however, a very challenging one and demanded a highly organized individual with clear leadership and communication skills. This was disbanded in favor of a flatter structure but has since contributed to our perceived service problems. The return to an academic and student affairs executive would unify the two divisions.

Strategies for improved communication between the two units include regular academic and student affairs meetings for directors and division chairs, and ensuring that counselors attend monthly faculty meetings. This should be employed regardless of a reorganization since the dwindling communication between the two units is creating a multitude of other service problems.

Other strategies for improving communications would be to support the establishment of a "Teaching/Learning Center" in the new Student Center as well as faculty and division chairs more frequently participating in new student orientations, an Enrollment Services function.

Recommendation 2: New position, Executive Director for Information Technology

Sustained growth of the institution will be best served by a centralized computing and technology center with a dean reporting directly to the President. It is imperative that online, web based technology be implemented to facilitate the admission and registration process. The absence of this capability inhibits enrollment. The institution anticipates frequent and rapid changes in our technology support systems as more and more becomes available to us and our needs continue to expand. Campus-wide technology services would be coordinated under an Executive Director/Dean reporting directly to the president. Accountability, efficiency and attention to detail will be increased dramatically. Certain units of the college would loose their preferred service status as the information technologies staff implemented the multitude of requests they receive based on institutional need and objective prioritization.

Students could be empowered to assume more control over their own educational planning once the degree audit program was corrected and kiosks were installed on campus for student use.

Advisors could have more time to engage in developmental advisement issues with students if their students were able to manage their basic course selection and scheduling.

Registration could be facilitated once prerequisites were updated, the degree audit program worked correctly and advisors could access registration information form their desktop computers.

Recommendation 3: Integrate a Participative Student Affairs Model

The organization of the student services team (Figure 1) is presented in a traditional chart format. A major weakness of an organizational chart and the structure it reflects is the two-dimensional nature of the representation. An organizational chart conveys only horizontal and lateral relationships. It cannot convey the quality of depth which is characteristic of relationships involving people (Richardson, 1972). A diagram displaying the interaction of the student affairs team within a Participative Model (Figure 2) is also presented. This model relies on integration, cross training and a greater degree of collaboration among individual departments. It is dynamic and flexible unlike the traditional organizational chart model, each area of specialization being interdependent with the others sharing overlapping responsibilities, neither having more importance than the other. Accountability is shared as is decision making for change within the organization.

Recommendation 4: Cross Training of Program Staff Members

A part-time reception position will be created from the rotating clerical pool for the sole purpose of providing greetings and assistance, directions, phone numbers, etc. at busy registration times of the year. Admissions, testing, career information, advisement, registration, financial aid, payment, counseling, information and referral, tutoring, placement, parking, library and student ID cards will all be available in the Student Center. This will be accomplished in part through cross training of secretaries, technical assistants and counselors.

Constituents will not be turned away for requested services because a particular individual is out of work that day. Another cross-trained individual will have the information to assist all students and visitors with all concerns at all times. Although this goal may be overly ambitious, it is an ideal to work toward. Cross-trained staff members will permit the rotation of counselors, secretaries and technical assistants to various offices at different times of the year to keep pace with seasonally disproportionate workloads.

The New Student Center

The catalyst for this work was the funding obtained to rejuvenate Cumberland's Student Center and transform the building into a dynamic, comprehensive enrollment services complex. Thus, this paper would be remiss if it did not address the new Center and its role from a program services perspective and the architectural necessities it should contain.

Consider a member of the community visiting a college campus for the first time attempting to enroll. Although we as employees have come to understand the process, testing, the offices and personnel involved, it can be a perplexing and overwhelming, even intimidating process for a first generation, college novice at any campus. How can we most efficiently and conveniently provide enrollment services to new, and registration services to returning students? A centralized location for all enrollment and registration functions as described earlier in this paper is what Cumberland is in the process of preparing for.

Recommendation 5: Program services coordination and consolidation

The renovation of the Student Center lies at the core of this recommendation. Admissions, testing, career information, advisement, registration, financial aid, payment, counseling, information and referral, tutoring, placement, parking, library and student ID cards will all be available in the new Student Center. Basic skills assessment and the Success Center will be relocated in the building. A testing center will be constructed there to provide full testing services including basic skills, CLEP and other college and university credit examinations, proctoring services, and academic tests for Cumberland's classroom instructors. This will provide a bridge to the academic side of the institution enabling the faculty to spend more time teaching and less time administering tests. With same day Basic Skills Test scoring, the Success Center will eventually enable the College to provide students with a one-day enrollment process.

Prospective students will be able to apply, take the Basic Skills Test, attend orientation and register in the same day. These comprehensive services will be implemented with a high level of collaboration and efficiency with improved communications over the existing structure in a highly congenial atmosphere.

Recommendation 6: Building design recommendations

Visitors entering the Student Center building will be greeted by a receptionist at a focal point within a large lobby area that will give visitors a “birds eye view” of the primary service office areas. Departments will be continuous throughout the Center with transparent boundaries providing a warm, open, receptive atmosphere. The building will be well lighted with ample natural and indirect light, attractively decorated in vogue colors, appropriate artistic wall hangings with comfortable furnishings and abundant plants and vegetation. Perimeter office space designated for management staff will be spacious and comfortable. Counselors’ offices will contain glass panels to communicate receptiveness and availability. All offices will be computer networked. Low partitions will be used sparingly to define common area workspaces for the secretarial staff and administrative assistants. A secure full-service bursar office constructed in a bank-type design will be located in a highly visible area. Appropriate signage strategically placed throughout the building will direct students and visitors.

Students will be able to find quiet individual study space, small meeting rooms for group work, recreation and social locations, comfortable dining facilities and computer terminals to do academic work. Kiosks will be available throughout the Center for students to use to access their academic records and financial aid accounts, to check their college e-mail and course web pages to communicate with other students and their instructors on line and search the Internet. Every effort will be made to communicate a professional, open, social, efficient and comfortable flow of information and service throughout the architecture, design, color and furnishings of the Center.

Recommendation 7: Create an Office of Nontraditional Adult Services in Student Center

Although it has not been referred to this earlier in this paper, one aspect of student life that the campus does not address is a visible office for services to adult students. This service probably does not exist because of the perception that our traditional and nontraditional students are one in the same and we treat them all equally. This is probably not the case and we are likely overlooking something. A year ago the college opened a day care center on campus only to have it fail. There was no nucleus of students on campus to support the center and take advantage of the incredibly low rates that were made available. Apparently our adult student population has learned to look elsewhere to address many of their support service needs.

Conclusion

Certainly, the 12 million-dollar Chapter 12 award for the construction of the Student Center was the impetus for this paper. The need for increased communication between the units of the college has been growing for several years, probably since the last reorganization when the Dean for Academic and Student Affairs position was split to a two-dean structure. This issue lies at the heart of many of the concerns detailed throughout this paper. In light of the enrollment and retention initiatives the institution has recently undertaken, many of which were not mentioned herewith, a clear, constant and reliable flow of information between the two units of the college is essential.

As the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, the new Student Center will increase the aggregate size of the student services division by placing the team members within close proximity to one another in the same building. This opportunity to revitalize the unit through cross training, teamwork and collaboration will reveal underutilized resources. We will work more efficiently. Providing the leadership of the Student Affairs unit remains dynamic, Cumberland's team should enter its 36th year of service well prepared to meet the needs and challenges of the constituents of Cumberland County.

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Figure 1 – Proposed Student Affairs Personnel Organization

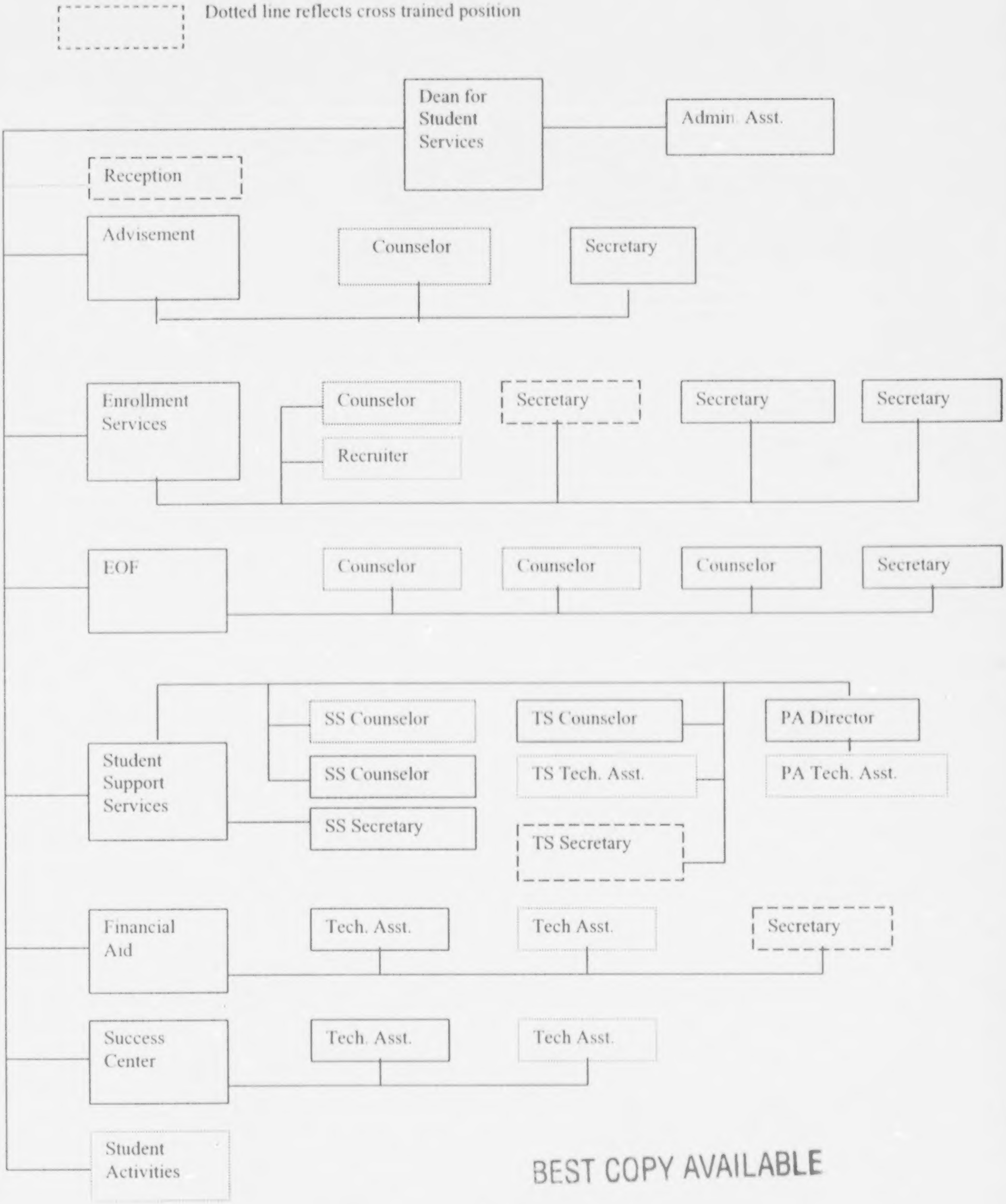
Dotted line reflects cross trained position
Dean for Student Services
Admin. Asst.
Reception
Advisement
Counselor
Secretary
Enrollment Services
Counselor
Recruiter
Secretary
Secretary
Secretary
EOF
Counselor
Counselor
Counselor
Secretary
Student Support Services
SS Counselor
SS Counselor
SS Secretary
TS Counselor
TS Tech. Asst.
TS Secretary
PA Director
PA Tech. Asst.
Financial Aid
Tech. Asst.
Tech Asst.
Secretary
Success Center
Tech. Asst.
Tech Asst.
Student Activities

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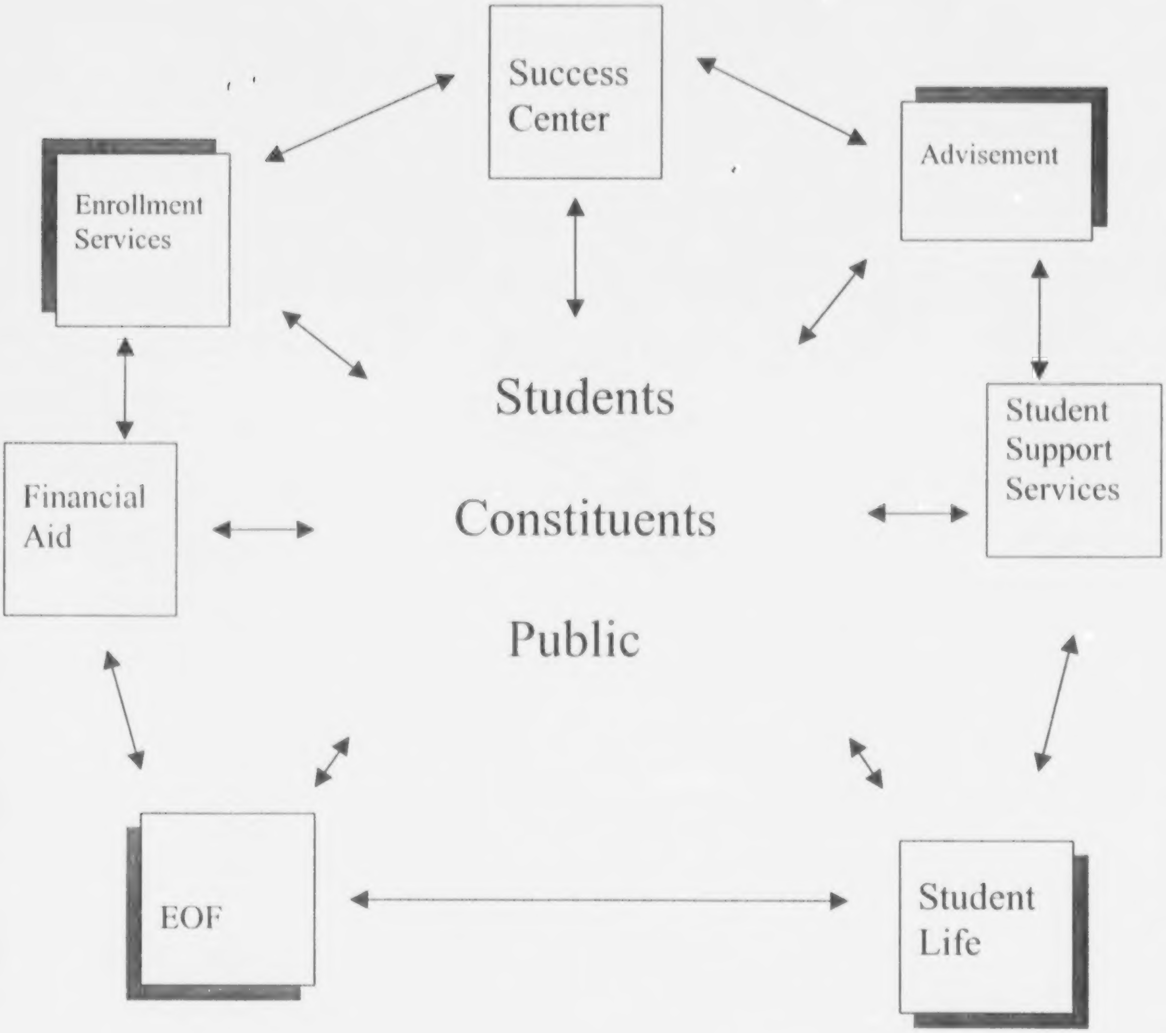
Figure 2 – Participative Organizational Plan for Student Services


Success Center
Enrollment Services
Advisement
Students
Constituents
Public
Student Support Services
Financial Aid
EOF
Student Life

Student Persistence in Web-based Courses:
Identifying a Profile for Success

Thomas Valasek

Raritan Valley Community College

Mid-Career Fellowship Seminar

Princeton University

May 23, 2001

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Introduction

Like many other institutions of higher education that have recently ventured into Web-based instruction, Raritan Valley Community College has discovered a disturbing phenomenon about online classes, namely, that the student attrition rate is often two to three times as high as that of comparable classes with traditional, face-to-face instruction. In the eight online classes (in English, Humanities, and Social Sciences) that were the focus of this study the average student dropout rate was 33%, as opposed to an average rate of 13% for traditionally-taught English, Humanities, and Social Science classes. This high attrition occurred even though the Welcome page of each course includes a "quiz" for prospective students to indicate whether they are "suited for online learning," and even though all but two of the instructors for these classes said they took special measures to help their online students succeed.

Moreover, the percentage of students in these eight online courses who received a final grade of "F" (15%) is also higher than the percentage of students (12.6%) who failed traditional English, Humanities, and Social Science classes. Since the WebCT software used for online classes at RVCC allows instructors to monitor the last date and time each student logged in, it is possible to identify students in online classes who effectively dropped out (i.e., stopped logging in) but who did not officially withdraw (or were not administratively withdrawn) before the deadline for withdrawing elapsed. Of the 26 students who failed in the eight online classes, 11 fall into this category. If these 11 students were counted along with officially withdrawn students, the attrition rate for these online courses would be 40%.

There has been abundant research, generated largely by Tinto's theoretical model (Tinto, 1975 & 1982), on why distance education students (mainly in telecourses) drop out more frequently than students in traditional classes. The literature attributes this attrition primarily to complex "barriers" that impede full student participation in distance education (Sweet, 1986; Garland, 1993; Pugliese, 1994; Brown, 1996; Morgan & Tam, 1999). But there is considerably less research about the other side of this question, that is, why distance education students, despite all these barriers, *persist* in their courses. And research related specifically to student persistence in Web-based courses is even scarcer. Nevertheless, there are indications that online classes tend to be "more favorably accepted" by students who exhibit "a certain level of self-motivation and self-organization" (Palloff & Pratt, 1999), that students who express a high level of satisfaction with online classes are learners who find learning "conducive for thoughtful analysis of class questions and commentary" (Gibbs, 1998), and that most successful distance education students "place primary responsibility on themselves to learn" (Miller & Husmann, 1994).

The purpose of this study is to identify common characteristics of students who persisted until the end of the term in the eight online courses observed and to construct a profile of students most likely to complete online classes successfully. The data for this study included demographic information from college records about students in the eight online classes, from an Online Student Survey administered during the last ten days of the semester, and from a survey of the faculty who taught these online classes.

Methodology

The following eight online courses from the disciplines of English, Humanities, and Social Sciences were chosen for this study:

English II
American Literature
Creative Writing I
American Film
Global Patterns of Racism
Introduction to Psychology
Introduction to Sociology
Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

From the standpoint of content these are standard introductory and survey courses, except for Global Patterns of Racism, which is an interdisciplinary, team-taught course that surveys the causes and manifestations of racism in diverse cultures. (Students may take Global Patterns of Racism for credit in English, History, or Anthropology. The three instructors for this course come from these disciplines.) From the standpoint of pedagogy these courses depend more on class discussion and student interaction than on lecture.

A total of 167 students were enrolled in these eight online classes on the tenth day of the semester, after the allotted drop/add period. Class size ranged from 13 to 29 students, with an average class size of 21 students. By the last ten days of the semester, after the deadline for withdrawing from classes had elapsed, 55 students had withdrawn (or had been administratively withdrawn), leaving 112 students still enrolled.

Ten days before the end of the semester the RVCC Coordinator for Innovative Teaching posted the Online Student Survey on the Home page of the eight online courses along with a letter encouraging students to participate in the survey. At this point in the term only students still enrolled were able to access and complete the online survey. The letter informed students that this survey, conducted with their instructor's permission and cooperation, was voluntary and anonymous, and that the instructor would receive only summary results of the survey.

The Online Student Survey was designed to gather some demographic information about the students in the study, particularly about any previous experience with online classes and about time commitments to other classes, jobs, and family responsibilities. In addition, it focused on four factors that may affect student persistence/attrition in online classes:

- The student's confidence using a computer.
- The number of times per week the student logs in to the course.
- The amount of time the student spends per week working on the course.
- The student's overall satisfaction with the online course.

The instructors who taught the online courses in the study were also surveyed concerning their expectations about student time commitments to online classes, their responsiveness to students, and the overall effectiveness of their online instruction.

Results of the Online Student Survey

Demographic Data

There were 66 responses to the Online Student Survey. Five of the respondents were enrolled in more than one online course in this study. (Four students were enrolled in two courses, and one student was enrolled in four courses.) For demographic purposes, therefore, there are 59 students represented in Online Student Survey. The following information was compiled from the survey about these 59 students:

- Twenty students (34%) had taken at least one online course previously, while 39 (66%) had never taken an online course before.

- All but five students in the study (92%) were enrolled in one to four additional classes during the semester, with an average of 2.4 additional classes.

- Among those students taking additional classes, 44% were taking at least one other online course (including online courses not part of this study).

- The average age of the students who responded to the online survey is 28 years, which is the same as the average age of all students attending RVCC.

- The percentage of "traditional" college-age students (18 to 24 years) in this group is 54% (versus 52% college-wide), while the percentage of students who were 30 or older is 36% (versus 35% college wide).

- Students in this group spend a significant amount of time working outside the home: 91% report working at a job more than ten hours per week, and 55% work more than 30 hours per week.

- More than one-third of the students in this group spend a significant amount of time on family responsibilities: 37% report that they are committed to family responsibilities that require more than 20 hours per week; 12% are committed to more than 40 hours per week.

In order to supplement the demographic data gathered from the Online Student Survey and to move toward identifying a profile of students who not only *persist* in online classes but *succeed* in them, we also looked at demographic data from RVCC student records for those who passed these online classes with a grade of "C" or better. There were a total of 70 students in this group, eight of whom passed two online courses in this study and one who passed four courses in the study. The following is additional demographic data about this group of students:

- 64% of the students who passed the online courses are female, and 34% are male.

- The average age of students who passed the online courses is 27.9 years.

- The ethnographic distribution of students who passed the online courses is 73% Caucasian, 7% Asian, and 16 % "unknown."

This demographic snapshot of students who passed the online courses contrasts strikingly in one area with that of students who failed or withdrew from these courses:

- The average age of students who failed the online classes is 22.1 years. (80% of the students who failed are in the 18-to-24 age group, while 8% are in the 30-and-older age group.)
- The average age of students who withdrew (or were withdrawn) from the online classes is 23.9 years. (65% of the students who withdrew are in the 18-to-24 age group, while 23% are in the 30-and-older age group.)

Student Confidence Using a Computer

When asked how much confidence they feel "about working with a computer" on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is "very little" and 5 is "very much"), most of the students in the class rated their confidence level at 4 or 5. (The mean response to this question was 4.2.) Only two students said their confidence was at 1, and none said it was at 2. Three of the five respondents who were enrolled in more than one online course rated their confidence with a computer at 5. Conversely, when asked how often they felt frustrated with computer problems on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is "very seldom" and 5 is "very often"), the mean response was 2.0. On this question only five students rated their frustration level at 5, and one student rated it at 4.

Amount and Distribution of Time Spent Working on Online Courses

In the Online Student Survey students reported that they logged in to their online course an average of 6.6 times per week, and spent an average of 28 minutes online each time they logged in. The average amount of time students said they spent altogether on their course (online and off-line) is 8.6 hours per week. There was a wide range among the responses to these survey questions, particularly for log-ins (ranging from 2 to 20 per week) and for total time spent working on the course (ranging from 2 to 35 hours per week). About half of the students reported that they worked six or fewer hours per week on their online course, while 36% said they spent ten or more hours per week. Together, these two groups of students at opposite ends of the "work spectrum" account for about 90% of the responses to this survey question.

Curiously, when the instructors were asked how many times per week they expect students to log in, they were sharply divided because they understood this question in two different ways. Five of the instructors understood the question as, "How many times per week do you [*realistically*] expect students to log in?" These instructors expected students to log in twice a week. The other four understood the question as "[*ideally*] expect," and they expected students to log in an average of 4.7 times per week. In both cases, however, the faculty expectations were lower than the average number of log-ins per week the students reported.

There was an even more dramatic division between the two groups of instructors when asked how many hours per week they expect students to spend altogether on their online course. The "realistic" group expected an average of 3.6 hours per week; the "idealistic" group expected 9.5 hours per week. This division among the faculty, along with the wide range of student responses to these questions on the survey, suggests that there may be misconceptions, both among faculty and students, about how much time students actually need in order to complete online classes successfully.

Another way to look at student commitment to online classes is to examine the number of "hits" that record when students visit content pages in online courses, the number of times they "post" comments on discussion topics, and the number of postings by other students that they "read." WebCT software tabulates these student activities individually, so we can directly correlate this data with each student's final grade. Since the range of "hits," "reads," and "posts" varies in the eight online courses, to compare this data for all students in the study it is necessary to find the median hits, reads, and posts for each course and calculate how much above or below the median the "A," "B," and "C" students participated in each activity. The results of these calculations (see Table 1) show that "A" students exceed the median number of hits, reads, and posts by at least 33% (and by as much as 66% in the number of posts), while "B" and "C" students fall short of the median in all three categories. There are some anomalies in these data, created by the small sample size of "C" and *true* "F" students (16 and 15 respectively) and by the fact that in three classes only one student received a "C" grade, which skews the range of responses for "C" students. Nonetheless, the data clearly indicate that in the "posts" category, the most important measure of a student's contribution to online discussions, "F" students participated much less than students who passed.

Grade	**Hits**	**Reads**	**Posts**
A	+42%	+33%	+66%
B	-19%	-37%	-22%
C	-46%	-119%	-13%
F	-36%	-36%	-31%

Table 1: Percentage Above (+) or Below (-) Median for Online Activities

The data related to hits, reads, and posts are especially interesting for the most successful students in this study. Among the 26 "A" students there were 16 who were above the median in all three categories and who, as a group, averaged 61%, 51%, and 88% above the median for hits, reads, and posts. The average age of these 16 students is

33.7 years, while the average age of all "A" students in the study is 31.4 years. The analysis of the hits, reads, and posts tabulated in these courses reinforces evidence that students who persist and succeed in online classes are prepared to commit considerable time and effort to course work, and that students who pass with a grade of "A" are willing to work significantly longer and harder than students who pass with a "B" or "C."

To find out whether there is a correlation between the students' final grades in these online classes and their overall GPA, we ran a chi-square independence test, comparing students who succeeded with students who did not, and also comparing students in each grade category. The results in both cases confirmed that statistically there is a strong association between the students' final grades and their overall GPA, showing that a student's GPA is a reliable indicator of the probability of success in these online courses. The frequency distributions for the chi-square analysis show that among the students who passed these courses only two have GPA's between 1.5 and 2.0 and none lower than 1.5, whereas among those who failed or withdrew there were 12 students with GPA's between 1.5 and 2.0, and 17 students lower than 1.5.

Student Satisfaction with Online Courses

The Online Student Survey includes three questions that measure student satisfaction with their online classes. The first question asked students to rate, on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is "very unresponsive" and 5 is "very responsive"), how responsive their instructor was to their questions and concerns. The responses to this question were highly favorable, with a mean of 4.4, and included no responses at 1 and only five at 2. The students, in fact, rated the instructors' responsiveness more highly than they rated themselves, since the instructors' mean response was 3.8 when asked to rate their responsiveness to students on a scale of 1 to 5. In the comments section of the survey several students specifically praised the responsiveness of the instructor, noting, for example, that their instructor "is extremely quick to respond via e-mail," "follows up quickly on comments," "responds promptly," "offers positive suggestions for postings or writings," or "gives very helpful feedback." Several students, however, commented that their instructors were not always prompt about "getting back to students," and others observed that "better communication" with the professor would improve the course.

The second question asked students to rate the "overall level of instruction" in the online classes on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is "very ineffective" and 5 is "very effective"). Responses to this question were also favorable, with a mean of 4.2, and again higher than the instructors' own rating of instructional effectiveness, with a mean of 3.8. One student wrote that what she liked most about her course was "the quality of the instruction, material, and student responses."

The third question asked students what recommendation they would give to another student interested in their online course, again on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is "very weak" and 5 is "very strong"). While still favorable, with a mean of 3.9, the responses to this question showed a wider range than the previous two.

Many students noted that what they like *most* about online courses are the convenience and flexibility of taking classes at home and the freedom to work on their own time and at their own pace. Several students were enthusiastic about online discussions. (Comments included: "I believe the group discussions are truly superior in an online course." "I feel more at ease writing to a group, instead of being in front of a class talking." "Discussions in the online course make it much easier to express myself.") Some students, however, wanted "more instructor interaction and feedback." One student said that online discussions "still don't replace classroom discussions."

What students said they like *least* about online classes is that they require too much work and take up too much time. One student stated, "I found I put in about twice as many hours per week in this [online] course as in others [traditional classes] I have taken here." Another said simply, "To be honest, it [the online class] was much more work than a regular class." Some students also complained that online classes are too impersonal and that they lack "in-person contact with instructor and other students." Two students said they missed "face-to-face contact" with the instructor.

Conclusions

The data from the Online Student Survey, along with collateral information from RVCC student records, suggest some demographic and behavioral characteristics that may be reliable indicators of student persistence and success in online classes. Other studies have also identified some of these indicators:

- *Non-traditional college students (age 30 and older) are more likely to persist and succeed in online classes than traditional college-age students (age 18 to24).* Studies of dropout rates for distance education students report higher levels of persistence for students over 27 years of age (Rekkedal, 1983; Cookson, 1989). And a current study at Atlantic Cape Community College finds that 66% of the students "surviving" online courses until the end of the semester are over the age of 29 (Russell, 2001).

- *Successful online students develop realistic expectations about how much time online learning will demand.* The most frequent comment from persisting students in this study was that they had to spend more time than they expected on these courses. The instructors agreed that many students withdraw from online classes because they take more time than students expect. Other studies indicate that online learning demands more time of students than traditional face-to-face instruction (Harasim, 1990; Gibbs, 1998; Bonk & Cummings, 1998; Palloff & Pratt, 1999).

- *Successful online students are organized and able to manage the demands of their classes along with their responsibilities at work and/or at home.* In an interview about her book, *How to Be a Successful Online Student*, Sara Dulaney Gilbert states that from the student's perspective one of the biggest differences between online courses and traditional courses is time management, which is one key to success for online students (Young, 2001). Other studies have shown that effective time management is critical for student success for distance learning (Bernt & Bugbee, 1993; Miller & Husmann, 1994), and specifically for online classes (Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Gilbert, 2001).

- *Successful online students feel confident about using a computer.*. Students who persisted in this study, even those who acknowledged that they are not especially skilled with computers, did not indicate that computer problems were an impediment to success, even if they were in an online class for the first time. These results appear to corroborate previous research indicting that computer experience makes no significant difference in outcomes for online courses (Hiltz, 1993; Harrasim, 1995).

- *Successful online students keep pace with course work and assignments, logging in regularly and frequently.* Students who persisted to the end of the semester in this study reported logging in an average of 6.6 times per week. In her book Sara Gilbert tells students straight out that the chances of success with an online course are higher if "you are able to discipline yourself to work at the course regularly and keep up with the deadlines" (217).

- *Successful students participate actively in online class discussions.* Analysis of "hits," "reads," and "posts" indicates that students who contribute most to online discussions succeed with the highest grades, while students who contribute little are much less likely to succeed at all. Some instructors in this study suggest that one way to help students succeed is to encourage more online participation and to monitor it more carefully. Bonk and Cummings (1998) concur with this suggestion. And in *Learning Networks: A Field Guide to Teaching and Learning Online* Harasim et al. state that among the factors that make a difference in student success in online courses is "the self-discipline to participate regularly." They also suggest: "To show that participation is important, grade it" (178).

Recommendations

The following are recommendations for improving student persistence and success rates in online courses based on the results of this study:

- *Use market research and community outreach to identify and recruit "niche" groups of students who may be especially well-suited and prepared for online learning.* Based on this study an especially promising target audience for online classes may be non-traditional female students, age 30 and older, employed nearly full-time either at home or in the work force. Gilbert (2001) says that the "typical" online student is a "caregiver" over 25, employed, with some higher education (74).

- *Provide better screening and advising for prospective online students.* The Welcome page of every online course should include a realistic "self-test" that helps students determine whether they are suited for online classes. Academic counselors need to advise students about the special demands of online classes.

- *Provide in-person orientation sessions for online students and encourage (perhaps require) them to attend, especially those enrolling in an online course for the first time.* The online instructors in this study strongly endorse this recommendation.

- *Encourage online instructors to make their course outlines and syllabi more concise than in traditional classes and to delineate clearly what they expect of students in online classes.* One of the "dozen recommendations" Bonk and Cummings (1998) make for more effective Web-based learning is to "provide clear expectations and prompt task structuring" (87). Harasim et al. (1995) also stress the importance of clear expectations, stated in terms of minimal numbers of log-ins per week and/or "messages" posted per week.

- *Encourage instructors to develop a "sense of community" in online classes.* This is another major recommendation of Bonk and Cummings (1998), also strongly advocated by other researchers (Johnson-Lenz & Johnson-Lenz, 1990; Harasim et al., 1995; Rea et al. 2000).

- *Encourage online instructors to monitor student progress closely and make timely efforts to contact those who fall behind, using private email messages or telephone calls.* Most of the online classroom management techniques recommended in Palloff and Pratt (1999) begin with the words, "*Make personal contact with the student*" to determine the cause of a problem, to encourage participation, to offer coaching, reassurance, or supportive responses (52).

- *Encourage online instructors to arrange informal face-to-face meetings with students, if possible, either individually or as a group.* Both students and faculty in this study commented that an online course can be a "lonely" and impersonal experience. Gibbs (1998) also observes that online students often feel isolated because they lack "face-to-face interaction with their peers and the instructor" (16). And Rea et al. (2000) conclude that some students become disenchanted with online learning when they do not "feel involved in the class" and that these students "may need additional support from the instructors which may not be available in the total technology environment" (150).

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Academic Vitality and the Academic Seminar

at

Community Colleges

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This paper addresses the academic needs of two-year college faculty. Specifically, "How can faculty members at two-year colleges maintain vitality in their disciplines over the course of their teaching careers?" We will survey a wide range of relevant activities, suggest a few new ideas, and explore in some depth the academic seminar, a model of which has been successfully in place for some years at Raritan Valley Community College.

The pursuit of academic vitality is not a frill; it is a necessity. Consider the role of the teacher. The act of teaching is not merely the passing of information. The essential aspect of teaching is that of creating within the student the capacity to *perform* in the discipline. This comes from inspiring, coaxing, cheering, guiding, and showing by example. To do this effectively one must show command of the material, currency, and enthusiasm; in short, academic vitality. Mastery of subject matter in depth, at an advanced level, guides instruction at the lower levels. Nor is this issue unique to two-year colleges. Loss of academic vitality can occur at all levels of higher learning. However, the problems associated with burn out are particularly severe at community colleges. We now present some of the reasons for this as a foundation for what follows.

- We perceive ourselves and are perceived by others as living at the fringes of the academic community. To those at more prestigious institutions we are often thought of as the ones that didn't make it to the big leagues. Students also often perceive us that way. One young high school student, speaking to one of my colleague's sons, said "yes, but your mom doesn't teach at a *real* college!"

- We are expected to "teach." Community colleges pride themselves, and most times justifiably so, on the concept that they are "teaching institutions." Because we do not have research obligations, we are expected to teach, typically fifteen hours of student contact time per week. When I started my teaching career there was some flexibility in assigned hours, but, at least at my institution, this student contact requirement has become etched in stone and dictated by contract. When grading (no graduate assistants here!) and class preparation are taken into account, this is a monumental time commitment. I believe we do a better job at teaching than many of our more prestigious senior institutions, but at what a price!

- We suffer from disciplinary isolation. Except for English and Mathematics departments, we are typically members of one to three member disciplinary units. There is almost no one on campus able to assess our competence in our field, or to stimulate us with original ideas and discussions in our subject area. Active participation at professional meetings and conferences may be our only source for interaction in our discipline. Because of the lack of meaningful institutional support (travel fund and budget constraints instead of inducements and incentives), even these kinds of activities tend to get fewer and fewer as the years go by, and we slip into deeper academic isolation.

- There is often conflict with the priorities of college administrators. Though most administrators genuinely want a vital, well credentialed, and well-informed faculty, they unwittingly put roadblocks in the path of academic development. One is expected to serve the community, both inside and outside the college. One is expected to serve on college and external committees and be "visible" at functions. These are often stated as specifically codified criteria for tenure and promotion.[1] At many community colleges community service is valued and rewarded more highly than academic achievement.

We now examine these issues and propose various forms of solution, so as to provide a framework for the development of a proactive program for faculty development. Some actions may be programmatic, requiring administrative action and support, while others may be personal, requiring private action.

I will begin with the premise that primary responsibility for maintaining academic vitality lies with the individual. Faculty members need to make academic self-development a major focus. We are hired after all, for the expertise we have in our discipline, and not for our commitment to, shall we say, 'community service.' The reality is that we serve our community best by knowing the most in our chosen field. Not staying abreast of developments *in our discipline* puts us at risk of waking up one day as a modern day Rip

Van Winkle, out of touch and not even knowing it. Here are some recommendations I propose for maintaining one's vitality:

- Read professional journals in your discipline. This should be a very pleasurable activity (being in your chosen field) and an excellent way to keep abreast of developments. Because we are stressed for time we may have to restrict ourselves to one major journal and one at a more popular level. However it is important to make the time commitment and to stick to it.

- Write, or otherwise create, in your field. Approach this work as though you were writing for publication, even though the work may not actually be published. It should at minimum be your personal notes, thoughts, and reflections on the matter at hand. It may be classroom related, but in my opinion it would be more useful if it were more closely discipline related. The much reviled dictum "Publish or perish" is in my opinion a truism of a different sort. We could say instead "use it or lose it." How much creating? Well maybe an hour a day should be set aside for keeping some sort of professional journal.

- As teachers, we should seek out students who show interest and promise in our discipline. As senior partners we could guide such students into mini research projects, encouraging them to investigate interesting questions in the field. Both teacher and student will grow from this activity. It may be that some of this exploration can be formalized (and get institutional backing) as independent study. [In practice, independent study courses are often used to allow low enrolment courses to run].

- Become a generalist. Many creative opportunities lie at the boundaries between disciplines. At a community college we have great opportunities to widen our horizons. It helps not only to maintain skills and knowledge in our own specialty but also in the broader base of our discipline, and even adjacent disciplines. Some of the most fruitful academic experiences of a professional career can come from teaming up with colleagues in adjacent disciplines in the development of cross-disciplinary courses. One should thus seek out creative opportunities in a broader context.

- Look for opportunities to speak publicly, again preferably on topics in your discipline. Many individuals I have spoken to indicate that preparing for a talk is one of the most rewarding academic experiences they have had. Often it is the only time when it "all comes together." Moreover this is a form of community service that is good for you and good for the community. Here is an area where we, as community college faculty, can outperform our senior colleagues. While there are exceptions, they are often too specialized to reach a general audience. This is truly where we can put the 'community' in community college.

- Maintaining membership in a professional organization can be helpful. Through newsletters, journals and magazines these organizations can help keep you abreast of developments in your field. Annual fees can be high, and you should attempt therefore to make the best of your membership. If you can manage it, attend at least one conference or discipline related workshop a year. This is where we meet our peers and get revitalized. The most beneficial exchanges most often occur off the record in casual settings. Conference attendance, and organizational activity are such obvious energy boosters, yet many of us at two-year colleges tend to stray away, and once away never seem to come back.

- Apply for sabbaticals and grants as often as possible. The application process, whether successful or not, is a rewarding learning experience. In this area there is no greater truism than "if at first you don't succeed, try, try and try again!" Success is often just another try away.

These are a few of the ways in which an individual faculty member can stay connected. It should be a joyful immersion; and keep in mind that it is critically important to *set aside* the time for self-development activities. After all, knowledge in our area of academic expertise is what we get paid for.

Now let us look at the various support mechanisms that can be provided by administrators and peers.

- Faculty development programs. These vary widely in scope from college to college, and also within colleges. Some programs tend to stress only technical matters… teaching methodology, uses of new technology and software programs, development of on-line courses etc. Others present a more balanced approach, attempting to divide resources between technical and academic development. There is a very important need for both aspects of development, but in this paper my concern is for the academic development of the faculty. I recommend that faculty development programs should set aside generous funding to support faculty attendance at conferences, *and should widely publicize the availability of such funds.* These programs should encourage faculty initiatives and work closely with the appropriate development office to find funding for special projects. Finally, the development programs should aggressively publicize academic initiatives undertaken by the faculty. In short they should be nothing less than a cheering section for academic development.

- Formal graduate study. Most community colleges support further graduate study by faculty in their contracts. Financial support is typically available, and further graduate study is encouraged by stipulations in the contract requiring a certain number of additional graduate credits to qualify for promotion to the next rank.[1] Unfortunately, there is a distinct trend here toward enrollment in graduate courses in education, rather than in one's discipline. While education courses may have their own merit, they should not be considered a viable substitute for maintaining academic vitality in discipline. I therefore encourage administrations to think carefully, and weigh differently these two types of graduate study.

- Workshops. In my opinion, these work best for academic development when the central theme crosses disciplinary lines, or extend a wide umbrella. Examples of usable central themes might be Environmental Pollution, Ethics in Engineering, Language and History, Social Engineering, International Marketing…etc. Such workshops/conferences tend to attract wider audiences and to provoke greater interest. Support, where necessary, should be sought through grants, and through the formation of multiple institution consortiums.

- Sabbaticals. The granting of sabbaticals is a significant feature at institutions of higher education, and provide another avenue for academic rejuvenation. However certain aspects of the sabbatical granting mechanism should be carefully monitored to provide maximum effectiveness. Sabbaticals should not be given as rewards for services rendered. Sabbaticals should not be given for projects that are not strictly academic. Sabbatical review committees should carefully weigh the academic merits of the projects proposed. If in doubt they should consult with members in the same or closely related disciplines to judge the academic merit of a proposal. The success of a sabbatical program rests on the perceived fairness of the awards process. Favoritism is quickly detected and destroys a program's effectiveness, or a willingness of candidates to apply.

- Administrations should show a willingness to entertain, or support, odd faculty initiatives, particularly those of a cross disciplinary nature. NEH or NSF funding can often be found for such projects if one knows where to look. A college office of research, planning and development can be helpful in finding such funding.

- Administrations should seek out academic development opportunities through collaborative partnerships with senior institutions. I have in mind, as an example, the Princeton Mid-Career Fellowship Program.[2] A consortium of New Jersey community colleges have teamed with Princeton University to provide a rich mid-career experience for two-year college faculty. In a year long course the fellows prepare papers on what they perceive to be important issues at community colleges. Through registration in concurrent courses in their own or related disciplines, they get disciplinary rejuvenation. As a participant, I can say the experience has been very good for me. I particularly appreciate the opportunity I have had to take an advanced course in my field, something I could not have done otherwise. My experience has left me an enthusiastic advocate, and I strongly recommend that partnerships of this nature should be developed, pursued, and supported nationwide.

- Technical assistance. I put this near the end, but it may be the most important element. Unfortunately it is not generally recognized that faculty members need considerable technical, secretarial, and general administrative assistance to accomplish even a small fraction of the initiatives suggested here. Too often have I seen diligent faculty members laboring under burdensome conditions, performing essentially secretarial functions, to meet some workshop deadline.

What a waste of talent! Administrations must commit themselves to providing sufficient resources to help faculty do their job! All extra-curricular activity is a benefit to the college community at large, and to not support such activity is short sighted indeed.

I would like to devote a special section to seminars and special lectures:

- Seminars. Senior institutions have regularly scheduled departmental colloquia and seminars. Such regularly scheduled seminars are almost unheard of at community colleges. Nevertheless they can be scheduled and made to work if they are conducted under a broad enough umbrella. Since Fall 1997 Raritan Valley Community College has been conducting a weekly Science Seminar during the regular school year. Prior to this, in the early nineties, there had been, for a few years, a Mathematics seminar, that met two or three times per semester, and a regular, though short-lived, Wittgenstein seminar in philosophy.

The science seminar[3] has been a great success, and currently draws 20 – 30 attendees each week. The seminar grew out of an attempt to develop an honors course in science. Since our department had been toying with the idea of a seminar for a while, we saw an opportunity to combine the two. We offered as an honors course "Science Seminar." Typically only two or three students actually register for the course, and it becomes an "Independent Study." Students registered for the course are required to attend all of the weekly seminars, and write a **short** report on the seminar, including in it some minimal research of their own on the topic. They are also scheduled to meet once a week with the course instructor (who has been myself) between seminars. At the end of the semester they are required to give a seminar themselves, on a topic of their own choosing, which they often do jointly, and quite well, I might add.

Finding speakers on a regular basis has been the hardest part of this enterprise. We have a loosely organized committee to hunt for speakers, and I believe the support of colleagues within the department has been very helpful. With a little enthusiasm, such support is not hard to find. Most of our speakers are members of our on-campus faculty, who volunteer (or are otherwise persuaded) to talk on some topic of current interest, at a generally accessible level. Recent topics have included the human genome, archeoastronomic dating of the pyramids, and El-nino.[3] Though most of our topics are of current scientific interest, we manage to involve speakers from other disciplines on occasion. Two of our English faculty addressed the topic of 'Science and Religion,' providing both modern and historical perspectives. On one occasion our resident philosopher spoke on the 'Philosophy of Science.' We get a fair number of outside speakers, through contacts with colleagues at other institutions and in industry. Recently, a world class mathematician, Neil Sloane, of AT&T, was gracious enough to address us on the contributions of Claude Shannon to computer science.

The seminars are announced on college e-mail, and everyone is invited to attend. The seminar schedule is also available on the college and department web page, referenced earlier. The audience is typically half student and half faculty. The students who attend regularly (over and above the students who are registered for the course) seem to love the experience. We even attract a few regulars from the nearby community, who ask to be placed on our e-mail list.. Most of the *presenters* have told me how much *they* have enjoyed the experience, and how academically stimulating they have found the simple act of preparation for these out-of-curriculum lectures. This past semester has been our most successful, and I think this indicates that the seminar is beginning to mature into a 'tradition.'

In the light of this experience, I strongly recommend that community colleges consider offering "area" seminars, such as Social Science Seminar, Humanities Seminar, Business and Management Seminar, etc., since single disciplines may not be able to support a narrowly based seminar. The benefit is heightened academic stimulation to presenter and attendees alike. Moreover, this kind of activity brings an academic luster to the campus that everyone appreciates.

- Special lectures. As an alternative, or supplement to the seminar, an institution might want to put on a set or series of lectures by distinguished speakers. For a few years now Raritan Valley Community College has been offering a "Distinguished Lecture Series" of three or four lectures in the spring, spaced about a month apart. The speakers, illustrious members of various sectors of the academic community, are paid appropriate honorariums which may sometimes be quite large. Hence this kind of activity requires a distinct monetary commitment by the institution. The funds are formally taken out of the budget of the faculty development committee, which promotes and runs these events.[4] The money is well spent, and our faculty truly appreciate this academic nicety. The lectures are well publicized both inside and outside the college community, are usually scheduled around the lunch hour, and are well attended. I would recommend some similar activity to all community colleges.

I would like to address this section to the professional organizations and the community at large. In my own field there has been a slow but growing recognition that two-year faculty are out on a limb. At annual meetings of the American Physical Society, there are now set aside special sections and workshops for two-year college members. The American Association of Physics Teachers has studied,[5]and more recently has spearheaded a drive to run regional meetings under a program referred to as TYC21. This is intended to counter the sense of isolation that some two-year college physics faculty feel. The American Institute of Physics has concluded a two year long survey of two-year college faculty, and is studying the results.[6]

What I would like to point out is that professional organizations in all disciplines need to recognize that important things are happening at the two-year colleges. More and more engineering and technical programs at senior institutions are being denuded of students at the freshman and sophomore level. They are having to rely more heavily on the influx of transfers from two year institutions. Why is this? First, the cost differential is immense. Second, the teaching at two year technical schools is a lot more user friendly. We have ever increasing numbers of students returning to us to get as many courses as they can to transfer back to their senior institutions. Evidently class size and disconnectedness at the larger institutions are important factors in the making of these decisions. Third, there is the physical convenience of the two-year institution.

It appears higher education in this country is shifting to a model where most students will take their first two years at a community college and their last two at a senior institution, followed by perhaps two or more years of graduate study, and professional organizations, community, state, and federal governments need to take note. It is an interesting observation that, in the last presidential election, education was standard fare on the stump, and two-year colleges were mentioned quite frequently! So we have been recognized. It is thus important that professional organizations and the various branches of government think seriously about the ongoing professional development of this cadre of faculty, so vital to the academic health of our nation.

I propose that professional organizations include within their organizational structure two-year college professional development committees (if they have not already done so). Governments, likewise, should establish special departments to handle community colleges and the professional development of their faculty. Funding institutions (NSF, NEH, etc.) have slowly come to recognize the importance of these changes and are beginning to portion larger segments of their budgets on the community college sector.

Such investments of time and money would be well spent, and a major service to our nation at large.

Notes and References

1. See, for example, *Agreement Between Raritan Valley Community College Board of Trustees and Raritan Valley Community College Faculty Federation*, 1997 – 2000, p 10.
2. For more information, contact Ted Rabb, Professor of History, Princeton University, who has been administering this program as part of a larger Princeton University Community College program.
3. For more information and schedules check these departmental websites
   http://www.raritanval.edu/departments/Science/sciseminar.html
   http://www.raritanval.edu/newhometest/frameset/depts.html
4. For further information contact Jacki Belin, Chairperson Faculty Development Committee, RVCC. (jbelin@raritanval.edu)
5. AAPT Report *Critical Issues in Two-Year College Physics and Astronomy, Report with Recommendations*, Sallie Watkins, Editor (1991)
6. AIP Report *Physics in the Two-Year Colleges*, Neuschatz, Blake, Freisner, and McFarling, (1998)